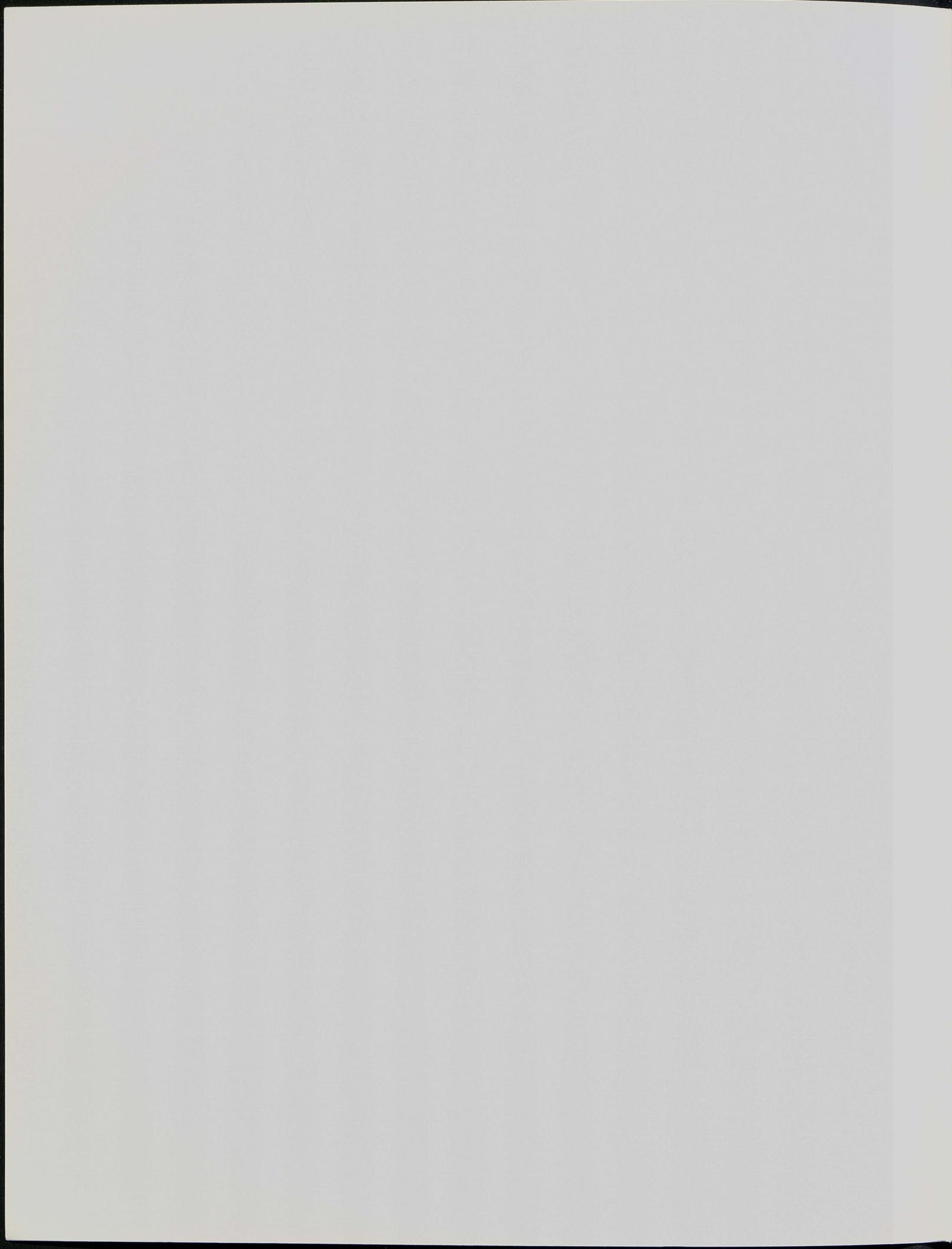


TJC Touchstone

Spring 1994







AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART by Shelly Haines

Foreword

"Let them see their soul."

That was the answer I received from poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko when I asked how to inspire my peers. I believe that a generation without a voice is virtually deceased. With this in mind, I set out to provide my peers with the simple opportunity to speak.

This work is us—the essence of life to all who created and will read this. Every contributor, from advisor to poet, photographer to editor, is an artist. That is what, above all, makes this magazine what it is. No one person contributed more in any measurable sense than another, because life is the creator of art. And art is a treasure chest for all to open. Whether it is joyous or painful, there is still a treasure for all.

I am grateful to everyone involved with this publication. Its necessity was never greater than now, for a generation without a voice.

Derek Rowan, *Co-editor*

All men are created equal in the eyes of God, but what about in the eyes of men? God gives to all men the same basic physical form, but he also allows, within his will, for each person to develop what is inside. Granted this, each mind and every imagination functions differently and acquires unique attitudes, morals and perspectives.

Spring 1994 marks the ninth edition of the *TJC Touchstone*. Unlike editions in the past, this year's *Touchstone* eliminated constrictive theme and allowed contributors to let their creativity wander to unlimited dimensions. What results is a publication that does not attempt to share one particular focus, but rather encourages writers and artists to share with readers what is on their minds or in their hearts. Not every reader, including myself, may agree with a contributor's personal belief or perspective. Just remember that, using your pen as a key, you, too, can unlock the door to your imagination.

We sincerely hope you enjoy the 1993-1994 *Touchstone*.

Silvana S. Vierkant, *Co-editor*

TJC Touchstone is a member of Texas Community College Press Association and Texas Intercollegiate Press Association. TIPA named "Voyage to Discovery," the 1993 edition, second best overall literary magazine among Texas junior and senior colleges of similar enrollment, 7,500 to 50,000 students. Contributing to this win were: first place for literary magazine cover, second places for typography, layout and design, photograph, poem, illustration and honorable mentions for illustration and single issue.

1992—"Passages," second in layout and design, fourth best overall literary magazine among Texas junior and senior colleges of similar enrollment, TIPA.

1991 "Carpe Diem"

1990 "Sunlight and Shadows," honorable mention, magazine sweepstakes and overall magazine excellence, TCCJA

1989 "Prospect and Retrospect," best overall, TIPA; honorable mention, magazine sweepstakes, TCCJA; second place, Columbia Scholastic Press Association, Columbia University, New York

1988 "Dreams and Nightmares," best magazine, Southwest Region, Community College Humanities Association, best overall, TIPA, third place, typography, layout and design, TJCCJA

1987 "Sunrise, Sunset," second place, overall literary magazine, TIPA, honorable mention, layout and design, TCCJA

1986 "Nostalgia and Now," first place, layout and design, TCCPA (now TCCJA) and TIPA

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About the title:

A distinctive streak left on a black touchstone when rubbed with genuine silver or gold was a foolproof test which allowed ancient civilizations to trust using coins in trade. We trust that you, too, will find genuine distinctive elements of value in the TJC Touchstone.

Carolyn Hendon
March 1986

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The Food Chain

by Cynthia Mers

Winter's snow ceded to the warming earth. Delicate crocus had already begun to bow their velvety heads, preparing to make a final, graceful exit. Only occasional patches of early morning frost dotted the Smoky Mountain countryside, signaling not the death of one season, but the birth of another. It would be Mrs. Tipton's seventy-third spring, her favorite time of year.

The renewal of the land, in a

sense, renewed her spirits. With Mother Nature as her companion, the dreary isolation of winter faded into memory. Mrs. Tipton never ceased to marvel at the handiwork of her dear, old friend, noticing every new leaf budding, each tender shoot rising from the ground. She especially took pride in duplicating some of those same feats in her own vegetable garden.

Wearing a tattered, wool sweater over extra layers of clothing to

ward off the chill that still lingered in the air, Mrs. Tipton began the cherished task of readying her small plot of land. Gloved, arthritic hands spaded and turned cold soil. Fertilizer, carted in from the chicken coop, was carefully worked into the ground. Although age had slowed her down, she was in no particular hurry, for she knew her patience would be rewarded.

Several days later, the old woman carried to the garden some small jars filled with seeds saved from the year before. Kneeling and stooping, Mrs. Tipton went up and down the straight, evenly-spaced rows. Gnarled hands poked shallow holes, dropped in a few seeds, then covered them with the black, crumbly earth. This, too, was time-consuming but by noon, six long rows were planted.

It didn't take long for the ground to absorb the sun's warming rays, and in a couple of weeks tiny, pale-green seedlings emerged. The peas were the first to sprout. This was the old woman's favorite vegetable. Not only was she especially fond of the taste, but the peas always produced an abundance of food that lasted throughout the long winter.

The old woman delighted in babying her tender, young crop. Every morning, she was out in her little vegetable patch, working in each row, pulling weeds to ensure no nutrients were wasted on useless plants, checking for insects that could destroy her efforts. And every evening, she hauled a bucket from the ancient well, watered each plant, again inspected the ground for signs of invaders and tucked her little children in for the night.

The inevitable, tell-tale signs Mrs. Tipton had known would



DOWN HOME by Jennifer Allen

appear came, late one evening, as the month of April neared its end. As she watered the peas, she followed the tracks that were imprinted in each row, taking notice of the many stems stripped of their fruit. The elderly woman completed her nightly routine, then, with a youthful vigor that belied her age, almost ran back to the house.

She pulled out the long, narrow box stored underneath her bed, and removed the rifle it contained. Sitting on the edge of the worn down mattress, she cleaned and oiled the gun. Once finished and propped against the back door for the night, the old Winchester

looked as new as the day Mrs. Tipton had bought it 20 years earlier.

Hours before the next dawn, the old woman was on the back porch. Sitting in her weathered rocking chair, the loaded rifle in her lap, she patiently waited in silence. Just as the sun began to peek over the horizon, Mrs. Tipton spotted, emerging from the thicket, what she'd been looking for. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, she raised the gun to her shoulder.

The antlered animal cautiously approached the garden. Stepping into the rows, and into full view, the huge deer started to nibble on the succulent peas. As he raised

his head to look around, Mrs. Tipton lined him up in the sights of the old Winchester. She squeezed the trigger as hard as she could: the big buck fell to the ground in almost the same instant.

Mrs. Tipton sat in the chair for a long moment, casually rocking back and forth. Finally rising, she leaned the trusty rifle against the wall as she entered the back door, and headed for the kitchen. She opened a drawer, and removed the shiny, long-handled knife with the curved blade. Turning to go back outside, the old woman smiled to herself, thinking about her little garden and all the wonderful food it produced.

A Difficult Passage

by Elaine Graybill

I had always thought that the word *elder* was used to describe a person who had come to the end of a distinguished career in public service such as the elder statesman, the leader of a council or tribe and the older and wiser, members of a religious organization. Then, in 1991, when my father died, I became an elder at middle age.

Losing one's parents is one of life's hidden passages. There is comfort in knowing that we are someone else's child, and a special sense of grief at losing that status. My loss was even greater, because, within a few months of my father's death, I lost two very special aunts, and my only cousin. Except for my children, I had no living relatives. I was not only an elder, but **the** elder.

My father's illness had used up most of his savings, and some of mine. I was unprepared for the many things that I had to take care of after his death. While handling his business, I neglected my own, and missed several important deadlines. Every day seemed to bring another obstacle. I got to the point where I was even afraid to open the mail for fear that I would have to fill out another form or pay another bill. I had no time to grieve. For a long time, I felt that I was only coping, and could barely make it to the next day.

One day, as I was driving to Tyler, I noticed signs of spring. That perked up my spirits, and I remembered a game that I used to play to make the drive seem shorter. I would think of as many images as I could to describe the

beauty of nature. It was a mental list. Nothing was ever written down, but every day I would faithfully edit my list to improve on the previous day's entries. This simple exercise delighted me and before long, I began to realize that, by doing it, I had begun to set goals and move forward. Soon afterwards, I made two lists, writing down on one of them the things over which I had some control, and on the other, things that would be resolved in time.

Three years have passed, and I am more comfortable with my status as the elder. I look forward to passages in my life, and in my children's lives. I must confess though, that at times, I wish that I could look backward for a nod or a smile.

Greenpeace

By Emmitte Hall

I have always found inspiration
in the trees,
And in the mountains, high above the clouds
that reach out to touch the sky.
There is a savage order here,
a stark and undeniable reality.
I sit before the perfect painting,
drawn by the original artist,
And sitting inside the picture,
I realize that this can never be duplicated,
Only with our voices
can we preserve the painting,
A choral shout that sings
"This is good" and above all else
must endure.



TRANQUILITY by Kim Collerain

Foiled Intentions

By Heidi Williams

The ship sailed on blue waters calm
Its crew all sound asleep,
Sauf Sir Pierre and Bernadine
Who gazed in eyes so deep.

With anguished heart he said at last
"If only this could be!"
For she was just a kitchen maid
And he was royalty.

At long, long last he crept away
And headed for his bed,
For bright and early on the morn
A princess he must wed.

The wedding hour was come
and gone,
The prince could not be found.
They searched the ship for missing
Pierre
Afraid that he had drowned.

Bern'dine's heart broke more
each hour
For the good prince was her life,
And when at dawn the search
did end
It cut her like a knife.

That dusk a final splash was heard
As she plunged into the deep,
Her heart was broken to the core
In death she could not weep.

But Pierre, who'd stowed away
Was merely biding time,
Heard whispers of the
scullery maids
And learned of Bern'dine's crime.

The mourning princess sat on deck
And listened to the birds,
'twas just a moment after dawn
The second splash was heard.

The Little Things

By Marygwen Arnold

I took a walk one day,
Beside a sparkling pond.
It was the first of May,
And the flowers covered the lawn.

The trees reached upward with green leaves so high,
As the squirrels frolicked to and fro.
Even with all this beauty I had to sigh,
For I knew I would soon have to go.

As I continued this enchanting walk,
The lark's song echoed through the trees.
And overhead flew the majestic hawk,
That soared above the highest leaves.

It was at this time that I came to know,
That it is important to appreciate the little things.
For this beauty one often forgoes,
Where hurry is the song one often sings.

Conjugal Bliss

By Ray Mutchall

Conjugal Bliss: Sociological Fact or Primordial Feminist Plot For Readily Reliable Refuse Removal?

And the Lord God said, "It isn't good for man to be alone; I will make a companion for him, a helper suited to his needs."

Genesis 2:18

"Of course God still loves you, Jimbo, ... but, to be perfectly honest, the rest of us think you're an idiot!"

*Elliott Weisenthal, Oct. 14, 1989
(Tammy Baker's divorce attorney)
Talladega Federal
Correctional Facility*

Ramon was a gusty, hard-working and creative individual who suffered the occasional bouts with loneliness that often times frequent young men in their lustfully impetuous twenties. One sunny Sunday afternoon he met what appeared to be the merciful answer to his prayers, his intellectual soulmate, his luscious temptress, his future bride, Bertha. Prior to this devously prearranged *chance* meeting at a mutual friend's birthday party, Ramon had revelled in his freedom, thought himself the epitome of male practicality and had achieved admirable grades in college. At three o'clock sharp on the afternoon of Dec. 31, 1979, before God and 41 stunned yet attentive witnesses all crammed into the stained-glass vestibule of Saint Stephen's Lutheran Church, poor Ramon blatantly blundered through a conjugal act with his beautiful new sweetheart.

By innocently assuming that his heretofore unalterable life would somehow remain well within the confines of the status quo after his New Year's Eve wedlock, Ramon willfully yet naively plunged into a virtual

batholith of reality, a rude awakening of sorts that would inevitably crush all future tendencies toward the expression of freedom, utilitarianism or intellectual stimulation.

Prior to commencement of this mutual cohabitation, Ramon—much like a lesser Norse god with an entire planet to play with—avariciously ravaged life, doing exactly what he had wanted to do, when he alone deemed it either advantageous or merely entertaining. Living alone on the woods, he would turn the volume of the stereo up until the foundations shook, carelessly consume the Colonel's cholesterol-choked chicken out of its greasy box and lackadaisically prop himself up on the porch watching the weeds in the yard go to seed. After tying this surprising constrictive knot, however, amidst howls of "Turn that stinking noise down!" he was actually expected to mow those weeds weekly whether they needed it or not, dishpan hands and all! Back in the good old paganly pre-nuptial days, he had enjoyed coming and going as he pleased, watching his minuscule portion of the forest turn in life-giving mulch and nonchalantly tossing empty Michelob cans into the nearest corner—providing, of course, that particular corner still sported ample space. His lovely new femme couverte, on the other hand, not only demanded that he stay put but painstakingly taught her reluctant subject the finer points of leaf-raking and garbage can usage! Resentful of this post-marital demotion from minor deity to household drudge, Ramon slowly began to focus his concentration upon certain rooms, special manly rooms, where he was certain to reign supreme.

The basement, garage and the

attic, Ramon foolishly assumed would always remain safely within the endocentric realm and long before committing marriage, he had wantonly immersed himself in these rusty tool and treasure-laden locales. Back then, the garage, kitchen and bathroom were utilitarian masculine shrines that practically oozed testosterone from every filthy nook and utterly disgusting cranny, and Ramon was truly king of all he surveyed. Along with the advent of matrimony, came a seemingly fanatical concept that these were not merely places to be cleaned, but that this utterly abhorrent activity had to be accomplished with some regularity! Throughout the Ford presidency and beyond, Ramon had devoutly practiced the ancient, nearly sacred right of accumulation, a primal, almost instinctive male belief that all objects—regardless of condition, function and aromatic appeal or the lack thereof—are to be kept in perpetuity. Even though this practice may well be laissez-faire in the bowels of the Vatican dungeons or the room of any normal 16-year-old, Ramon's ever-widening helpmate remained steadfast in her conviction that all garbage—including a disproportionate share of his personal belonging—should be thrown out. On his trek from the attic to the curb, moth-eaten moose head in hand, he was unexpectedly pommeled by the absurd notion that his yokemate, in one fell regicidal swoop, had just transformed him into the king of refuse removal and toilet seat disposition.

During the Carter administration, Ramon zealously tested the parameters of his mind. Always careful to pay the rent and the bills on time, he routinely totalled the

grocery bill in his head before reaching the cash register, created award-winning works of art and profitably invested in the weekly poker game with the exuberant abandon of youth. But by the time President Reagan was re-elected, the doughnut-swilling female who made up 50 percent of this love match legally had convinced him that he had managed to hold his own on the topic of business, politics and—much to a young cleric's dismay—religion, in both English and Italian. Yet after more than a decade of watching his ball-and-chain's influence and girth expand at an astronomical pace, she had systematically alienated

all of his friends and very nearly convinced him that he barely retained command of his native tongue. This everlasting lovefest had, in essence, reduced Ramon to the rank of village idiot.

By the time Bush inhabited the White House and Operation Desert Shield highlighted the evening news, martial bliss had totally shackled Ramon's precious freedom, hopelessly bogged his priorities down with mindless rules and cumbersome obligation and very nearly crushed what remained of his ego and spirit. Honesty, trust and compromise had never been permitted to enter the picture. As a result—on the

very night that Desert Storm unleashed its full fury upon the sands of Kuwait and Iraq—another type of warfare had been broken out on the home front. It was an admittedly one-sided yet decisively judicious conflagration that involved a slumbering snoring and drooling Bertha, a razor-sharp meat cleaver and a cold-blooded—surprising joyous—release of over 10 full years of pent-up frustration. Whenever he begins to feel trapped, depressed or lonely, Ramon reflects upon this unique emancipation he now refers to as the night of dismemberment and selfishly allows the memories of blow after sticky-sweet blow to wash over him like a warm familiar blanket. Seeing the loathsome crone's blood splatter haphazardly against the walls, bedspread and his very face, hearing the gurgle-thump, gurgle-thunk of his actions and feeling the sticky red goo of life upon his fingertips, Ramon still watches fascinating scene over and over and over in his head. Ramon has quite a few new friends, now most of whom wear sterile coats with pretty white and blue and orange name-tags. Oh sure, Bertha still goes to visit Ramon from time—mostly for appearance's sake—but he still stares right through her, smiling that same stupid self-satisfied smile she had found him wearing the morning after the night in question.

And the Lord caused the man to fall into a deep slumber, and callously ripped one of the ribs out his body and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. To which, the woman said, "You did what?"

"That's it!" Adam exclaimed.
"I swear to God I'll never order the friggin' ribs again!"

*Genesis 2:21-23
King Clyde Version*



IRONWORKS ILLUSION by Dottie Parker

Stepping Stone

By Silvana Vierkant

Life is as simple as a stepping stone
To another of celestial delight.

And how you take that single step
Depends on the morals you keep in sight.

Conception

Anticipation

Excitement

Joy

Birth

Happiness

Girl or

Boy?

Childhood

Development

Growth

Infantile

Teenager

Trouble

Concern

Juvenile

Adulthood

Maturation

Independence

Prime

Old Age

Long-lasting

Senility

Decline

Dead

End

Demise

Depart

Afterlife

Contentment

Peaceful

New start

It Just Wasn't the Same

By Marquette Maresh

I talked to an old friend tonight
And it just wasn't the same
Don't know what I really expected
It had been quite some time
The air was tense as he laughed
And acted just a little too enthusiastic
While I played along just as if nothing had changed
But we both knew it had
And it would never be the same
It wasn't the conversation
He rambled on falsely excited
And I said "um-hm" in all the right places
It was what lied beneath the empty words
The sincerity of feeling was gone
Leaving an old and empty shell behind
I talked to an old friend tonight
And it just wasn't the same.

The Greatest Love

By Alicia Newburn

As my face touches the pillow
My mind is somewhat at ease
I've been thinking about you lately
And how you're so easy to please.

Your attitude is upbeat
Never looking down at me
It never matters how hard I fall
Your hand always reaches out to me.

My ears are never closed
Always vacant for advice
Of how I can be a better friend
Person, lover and wife.

I know that no one is perfect
But you know you are to me
Those eyes, that smile, that approving look
They're all award-winning to me.

Now as I drift off to sleep
I look over to see you lying there
Right beside me throughout the night,
throughout my life
And I know I have nothing to fear.

Halting Steps

By Luke Stephens

There is a road I must travel down
It leads far from home.
I hear the call from distant towns,
Fear of the unknown.
Am I to be ever alone?
Or are you there waiting . . .
A path into my heart of stone?
Path I am making.
The road is ever before me,
Searching for your eyes.
Finding nothing I cannot see.
Frozen heart of ice.
I will never find your embrace,
Until I begin
To walk through this uncharted
place,
And turn to look in.
First I must discover myself,
There will I find you.
Halting steps . . .
Into the unknown.



A BRAVE'S WORLD by Kody Moore

Red and Yellow, Black and White

By Jeff Palmer

Red and yellow
Black and white

Side by side
They did fight

Against the enemy
They were brave

They are laid
Together in the grave

Red and yellow
Black and white

Against each other
They did fight

Enemies of each other
They had made

Red and yellow
Black and white

Between each other
We must not fight

Making plowshares
From our blades

We can stop this
Filling up of graves

Bedtime Story

By Darron Moore

Yes sir, that certainly is some dog you've got there. Plays fetch, sits up and begs. What's that Stefan? You don't mean he can bring your daddy his slippers, too? My goodness, that Rex sure is some dog.

The last time I saw a dog it was my fourth birthday. Now, by the looks on you children's faces, you'd think you never imagined your old grandpa ever being a kid. But I was once your age, all full of fire and vinegar, just like you. My parents had decided to have an 'educational' party, all the rage at the time, so with six or seven of my friends, we piled into the pod and took off for the Zoo.

Yeah, it was long before the automated highway of today, back when persons took their life into their own hands whenever they wanted to go somewhere. The Zoo was across town, nearly 30 miles, and it took us most of the day to get there. But all the way Mom and Dad kept telling us this would be a memorable day. Something to tell our grandkids about, just like I'm doing now. I remember one girl giggled at the allusion of marriage and smiled what was the most alluring smile at us boys. 'Course we just turned red and pulled her pigtails. She pinched us back, and just as we were about to launch a counterattack, the traffic broke and the pod lurched forward. Dad took advantage of an opportunity for speed. He must have gone past 30 miles per hour, really flying, when the jam closed again. We went into a tunnel and Mom was just about to turn the TV on when Jon, a squinty little kid as I remember, pointed at something through the front dome.

There it was, the Zoo, all 212 stories of it, a giant cube gleaming

gold in the middle of Clearwater Lake. Dad started maneuvering across the 15 lanes of traffic to the parking complex, and we all started to cheer. In another couple of hours we'd get to see animals we'd never seen before except in old dramas like "Tarzan" or "Ma and Pa Kettle Go to the Fair."

After Dad had paid for the parking slot, we all squeezed out of the pod and made our way downstairs to the tunnel that led to the Zoo itself. Dad told me that this must be my lucky day, because somehow we had managed to find a slot on the sixteenth floor. Some people had to park way up on the roof. Mom said she couldn't enjoy even a visit to the Zoo if she had to climb 200 flights of stairs to get back to the pod. But we were too excited to care about any parking slot. We had come to see the animals.

At the entrance, we were all X-rayed just like I'm sure you've all seen at the spaceport, given an oxygen mask and goggles and covered from head to toe with

some kind of spray that congealed into a flexible transparent suit.

Mom's and the girls' purses were held at the front desk, so we boys thought we were so privileged to be able to keep whatever was in our pockets with us. I vaguely remember having a pocket knife, but that's just an old man's synthi-fiber gathering. Besides, the UNSPCA would have had me in irons if I had tried to bring so much as a straight pin, let alone a knife, into the Zoo.

Stefan, if you don't mind, son, could you come get your dog? No, it's not that I don't like ol' Rex, it's just that its been so long since I last saw a dog, I don't rightly remember whether I'm allergic to him. That's a good boy, you play with him for a while.

So, decked out in our enviro-protective suits, we went through the ornate gate, which had been carved by hundreds of artists from around the world. They'd been commissioned by the U.N. to tell the glory of each animal's birthplace, how they lived, all the



THE CLEARING by Lynda Mabry

things that they once were. Past the gate was the Great Hall of the Ancestors, a massive space dedicated to the thousands of warm-blooded species that had been wiped from the face of the Earth by man's arrogance. The light was subdued and somber, like what you would find in a holy place, like a church or TV studio. The architects were chosen from a field of millions, and I seem to remember that they were from some tribe of American Indian. In the hall were the remains of proud and elegant creatures from around the world, ranging from a room devoted to all the extinct varieties of whale, to a bank of saint nooks carved from the marble wall that stretched on for what seemed like miles. In these nooks were placed all our closest mammal ancestors. From the smallest field mouse to the great polar bear, none were left out. This hall was placed at the beginning, the guide told us, so all could realize how much was lost, and how important it was to save the remaining animals.

Next was the Cold-Blooded Wing. No, Greta, I don't mean the Mafia. You children really shouldn't watch so much historical fiction, it'll rot your brain. No, I mean the reptiles and amphibians, and, of course, the fish. I'll bet you can't name a single type of fish, can you? I knew it.

Elias, these grandkids of mine don't know the first thing about animals and it's all your fault. Now don't give me that "who me?" look. When you were growing up, I seem to remember you kept a scrapbook of all the species that were going extinct. Anyway, tomorrow you and I are going out and buying new stimvids on all the lost animals. I know how much it'll cost, but it's not about money. That's what we're doing. That's final.

Now where was I? Oh, yes. There was the Cold Blooded Wing, which was amazing, what with all the colors and shapes,

simply amazing. But then we found my favorite, The Flying Wing. Heh, heh, always tickled by that name. Yessir, in there, in a room as high as the sky and half as wide was every species that had ever flown, glided or skimmed through the air. You know, I think they even had a flying fish.

I remember looking up at all those suspended bodies and imagined myself swooping in and out of their ranks, and thinking to myself what a thrill it would have been to see them in nature. But even then most of the species were already gone, and then I got really depressed. I'd always had an interest in flying, but I'll tell you about that some other time.

Yes kids, it was truly a majestic sight. The only time I felt that much awe was the launch ceremony of the Arcturan Fleet. Stefan, do you remember that? No, you couldn't have been more than two when they left. Lord, I don't think there was a dry eye on the planet when they lit out of orbit, carrying the frozen DNA of all the remaining species to that far away planet. Wouldn't it be something if there was something out there to fly through the air with our parrots and doves?

No, there Greta, Grandpa isn't going to die on you, stop your crying child, I'll be here to tuck you in as long as you need me.

But I haven't finished my story, have I, little Maria? I haven't told you the most wonderful part of that day. After the halls filled with their mountains of animals and miles of scientific information on each, after it seemed they had shown us every animal that had ever been, they brought us to the true heart of the Zoo.

It was so far underground they had to take us down in a huge elevator. After several minutes pushed in with hundreds of folks, the car stopped and the doors opened to the most wonderful sight in the world, aside from

seeing all you kids born.

Behind a pane of glass at least a foot thick there was a nursery of baby animals—kittens and rabbits and squirrels and other cute, cuddly little animals. The crowd couldn't help their cries of 'Ooh' and 'Aaah.' But the cutest baby was slowly walking towards us with still wobbly legs, tail wagging faster and faster as he got closer to the window. His tongue was hanging out and his eyes were bright and happy. In an instant he had stolen everyone's heart. It was an honest-to-goodness puppy!

The elevator guards began to usher us back into the car, but no one could budge. I remember seeing many teary faces as we reluctantly shuffled backwards toward the car. My dad was one of those who could not control himself, and Mom had to help him back to the elevator. Years later he told me that the little puppy had looked just like one he had when he was a boy, back in the late 20th Century. It touched him, as it did us all, somewhere deep inside to see that they had managed to bring back man's best friend. It gave us hope for the other lost species.

Well, children, now it's time for bed. Grandpa has kept you up far to late already. But I'll be here tomorrow. Leave Rex. Your daddy and I will put him to bed. Yes, Greta, I'll come tuck you in child.

I know, I know, Elias, you think I should have told them everything. No, son, those kids need a little more childhood before they find out how some radical humanist smuggled a fusion bomb into the Zoo and turned that wonderful cathedral into crystalline slag. Let them believe a few more years that somewhere there's a place where warm cuddly animals are raised up to live with good little children and that dogs have always had to be plugged into the wall at night.

Gone Forever

By Silvana Vierkant

Times were changing—too slowly for some—but to others, like Jessi, the time seemed nonexistent because there was never enough of it to enjoy. To Jessi, it seemed like just yesterday she was crawling onto her mother's lap and handing her a book to read or standing in the kitchen, trying to help her mom make homemade crackers. But those days were gone forever, Jessi was now a young woman who was engaged to be married tomorrow. Her life was supposed to be a happy, joyous and unforgettable experience right now. Yet, she knew that it could never be because she was missing a piece of the puzzle that made her life complete. And worse yet, she realized that nothing could ever replace this piece that had been missing now for about six months. No one could ever fill in the space that her dead mother had left behind, She was gone forever.

Jessi lay back in the cool summer grass and winced in grief as she remembered the tragic moments leading up to her mother's death. She remembered the fight over the kind of necklace that she should wear in the wedding. She wanted a gold locket and her mom wanted her to wear a strand of pearls. She remembered the incessant fighting between them—not just over the necklace, but over all of the wedding arrangements including the type of cake and the style of wedding dress. She remembered the policeman showing up on their doorstep in the middle of the night. She remembered the numb feeling that ran through her body the moment the police told her and her father that her mom was attacked and killed by two men in an alley downtown. She remembered the feelings she had when

she realized that she could never again tell her mother how much she truly loved her and appreciated everything she had ever sacrificed for her. And she kept remembering how she wished, and sometimes just expected, her mother to walk through the door and start fighting with her over another wedding arrangement. But it would never again happen. Her mom was gone forever.

Jessi stared up at the first star of the night that was barely twinkling through the clouds and she remembered how her mother always told her that her wishes would come true if she just believed. So, for one last time, she closed her eyes hard and wished the same wish she had for the past six months.

"Starlight, star bright, first star I see tonight. I wish I may, I wish I might have this wish I wish tonight—I wish my mom would come back so I could tell her I'm sorry."

This time, Jessi tried to believe, really tried. But after all this time, she felt as if her wish would never come true. In fact, the only thing she really believed now was that her mother was gone—gone forever.

Jessi got up and walked towards town. The darkness enveloped her, but she wanted to have one more night to herself to think. She still couldn't comprehend the fact that her mother would not stand up with her at her wedding, see the birth of her children or celebrate another birthday. She couldn't believe her mother would never know how much she loved her. And she couldn't believe that her mother had died believing that her only child hated her. And she couldn't believe their stupid fight that had weighed on her mind for so long. Once again, her last

words to her mom came back to haunt her as they had done so many times before ...

"Why can't you let me do what I want to do," Jessi had shouted. "Why can't you just stay out of my life!"

"I just want your wedding to be perfect," her mother had responded. "I want this to be the happiest day of your life."

"No, Mom," Jessi had shouted, "You want this to be the happiest day of your life, not mine. Just stay out of my wedding and out of my life. I don't want to have anything to do with you and I don't want you at my wedding!"

Jessi started to run, tears falling from her face as she remembered her last words to her mother. The memories started pressing down on her chest until she couldn't breathe. She fell to the ground and cried, feeling this pain would haunt her for the rest of her life. Nobody understood. Nobody could understand. Nobody could understand what it was like to lose a mother, especially under such hateful circumstances.

"Oh, God," she screamed, "Let this pain end!" But it would not go away. Her mother was gone forever.

Jessi slowly got to her feet and, shaking all over, she realized that she was in the alley behind the jewelry store—the same alley that her mother was killed in. She thought about how the killers roamed free today.

"Can't you do anything?" she screamed to the police. "Can't you find the killers?"

"Ma'am, we are doing everything we can," the police had said. "We have a state-wide search going on. We will find them. Give it time."

Jessi didn't have time! She wanted the killers behind bars



SAMANTHA AND HER FRIEND by Stacy Richardson

now. It had been six months—her mother was dead and the killers were free! Why was this happening to her?

"Why, Mom? Why did you leave me like this?" Jessi wailed into the night. "I need you. Please Mom, don't leave me! I need to tell you that I love you. Please, Mom, come back so that I can say I'm sorry!" Jessi felt as if her happiness was gone forever, like her mother. She slowly dragged her weary body back home where she crawled into bed and slept until morning.

"Time to wake up," her father softly said as he shook her awake. "It's your wedding day!"

She turned over and thought about her wedding. Everything was finally ready. She changed all of her wedding plans and made them exactly the way her mom had wanted them. She even bought the strand of pearls instead of the locket. The only thing missing was her mom, but she was gone forever.

She slowly got up and started to prepare for her wedding. The day went by in a blur. Her friends

came to help her get ready and the caterers came to prepare food for the reception. Finally, the moment came—Jessi was finally ready. She slowly and carefully slipped on the string of pearls her mother had begged her to wear.

"I love you, Mom," she whispered into the air as she fastened the clasp. She turned from the mirror and jumped a little at the sight of her dad in the doorway.

"Jessi, may I come in?" he asked. Without waiting for her answer, he came in and took her hands in his. "Your mother would be so proud if she saw you today," he said tearfully. "You do know that your mother wanted your wedding to be perfect, don't you? She wanted to give you the wedding she never had and I think she would be pleased if she were here today."

"Oh, Daddy," Jessi cried. "I miss her so much! Every time I think of how she died believing that I hated her and how I didn't want her to come to the wedding, I want to die myself. I think that maybe then I could clear things up with her. But as it is, Daddy, it's so hard living with this guilt."

"Jessi," her dad said, "I know you and your mother had your differences. And I know you and your mother separated on hateful terms. But, I also know how much she loved you and I think I have something that will let you know exactly how much."

He reached into his pocket and pulled out a little box. "Jessi, the night your mother died, all I could think about was why she was out so late at night by herself. I tormented myself wondering why I was not with her and how I might have saved her life if I had been. But, it was not until the police gave me this that I realized what your mother was doing. He took Jessi's hand and placed a little box in it." He then reached into his pocket and pulled out a note.

"Jessi, the police found this box

next to a trash bin in the alley where your mother was killed. They found the note in her coat pocket," her father said. "The police said that it looked as if your mother, during the struggle, threw the box away from her so the attackers wouldn't find it. Apparently, she succeeded because they gave it to me that night. Your mother loved you very much, Jessi. Maybe knowing that her last thoughts were of you will comfort you and let you know how much she cared for you."

Her dad walked towards the door. "I'll be waiting for you outside," he said. "You come when you are ready."

After he left the room, Jessi sat down on her bed and opened the note:

Dear Jessi,

You will soon be starting a whole new life. I will still be around if you ever need me, but I can't go on making up your mind for you and planning out your life. You are old

enough to realize what you want and I just want to see that you get it. Sweetheart, forgive me for taking over your wedding. I just wanted to make it the happiest day of your life. I love you and I want you to arrange your wedding the way that you always dreamed it would be. I know that you will make a beautiful bride and I hope that you will still let me sit in the front row and cry when I see my beautiful baby girl walk down the aisle all grown up. I'll always be here for you, Jessi, and I will never stop loving you.

Mom

Jessi folded up the note and picked up the box in her hands. She slowly opened it and inside found the gold locket she had wanted to wear. She fingered it lightly and gave in to the tears she had managed to fight back all day. She cried because her mother was dead. She cried because her mom could not be at her wedding. But most of all, she cried because she was relieved. Her mom had

forgiven her and had not died hating her. This was the relief that Jessi had wished for. She was free from the weight that had pressed against her heart these past months and she was free from the guilt that nearly drove her to her own grave.

Jessi sat up on her bed, wiped away at her tears, and went to the mirror. She started to unclasp the pearls but then stopped suddenly. She reached down, and lifted the locket out of the box.

"This is what will make me happy," Jessi said as she slipped the locket around her neck so that it lay right underneath the pearls. "And," she said, "this will make me happy, too."

She turned to open the door to a brand new life and remembered what her mom had always said, "Your wishes will come true, Jessi, if you just believe."

Jessi's wishes did come true. She knew that her mother would never be gone forever—at least not from her heart.

Windows of Nature

By Mary Clay

Blankets of snow on trees and mountain slopes; winter.
I'd rather be a skier than a snow plow.

Flowered meadows and gentle rain; spring
I'd rather be a rose than a compost pile.

Hot beach sand and tumbleweeds; summer.
I'd rather be an ocean breeze than a desert wind.

Geese on the horizon and brilliant colored leaves; fall.
I wish I were a painter instead of a poet.

Hidden Love

By Heidi Williams

Although you did not know it,
I loved you from the start.
Through all our years of friendship
You reigned inside my heart.

With you I shared my deepest
thoughts
Of feelings and dreams held dear,
You told me of your hopes and hurts
Causing us to be drawn near.

As each year went by—
The closer we became
'till my heart would flutter
At the mention of your name.

Through all my heart's gymnastics
I never did let on.
For speaking of my love for you
Would not have turned you on.

I was waiting for the time
When we were old enough
For something everlasting
To sprout from all my love.

Maybe I waited a little too long
Or perhaps it just wasn't meant to be,
Whatever the reason, I'll always
remember
The dreams I had of you and me.

My greatest regret through all this
ordeal
Is hiding a part of me from you
Trying to pretend that I'm okay
So that you will not guess the truth

As time goes on, I hope I'll find
Someone who's right for me.
But know that deep inside my heart
A part of me you'll always be

Our friendship I'll hold on to
And let the other go
So please, one last embrace
Then leave, your seeds to sow.

My tears and love you'll never know
Beyond what's rightly shared
With a friend who's oh-so-close
But blind to how I've cared.

Peace, My Child

By Shirley Puckett

Tender stem
Green-eyed maiden fair
Blossomed beauty born
An oyster's pearl would not

Ring of jade
asure of a lovely lily
fitted for her child
y slip upon a slender
This band to bear
witness of strength
Of love
Of loss

God's chosen one
God's trusted one
This stem
To not break but bend
Toward His light
When darkness blankets her world
With silence and old letters dear
When a fragrance in the garden
Reminds her of her mother's
Golden hair

Be at peace my child
The Lamb and I
Have not forgotten you

Reminiscing

by Darlene Barnett

The plant sits on the file cabinet, tall and spindly in the nearly windowless office, struggling to stay alive, just like Johnny who gave it to me tried until he couldn't anymore.

Betty is so happy she's pregnant. I haven't ever seen her so happy in the two years I've known her. Her husband died, not knowing she is positive and pregnant. Will her baby be infected from her and die before her or not?

Todd always gives me a hug. He is so thin I can feel his bones through his clothes.

Carlos couldn't imagine why his hair wasn't curly anymore after he started taking the medicine. Joanne will miss him.

Wes' knees are worn out but no surgeon will replace them.

That's how he found out. He's very protective of Mary.

Michael is so handsome. He has deep dimples in his cheeks. Looks like he could have been a movie star, but for how long?

Tom's dad will try to pay for just about anything that might work, but there is nothing that works yet. This father may have to see his son die before he does. No parent should have to do that.

Juan loses himself in alcohol and drugs until he gets caught and ends up in jail. We try to get him back on track for as long as we can.

We put Frank on the train back to Chicago after making arrangements for someone to call us when he got there, if he got there. He did. He lasted only three weeks.

Roy and Scotty take care of each other but Scotty's count is going down. Roy worries Scotty won't be with him long, and who will take care of him when his time comes?

Before Phillip died, he told his parents he had leukemia. They

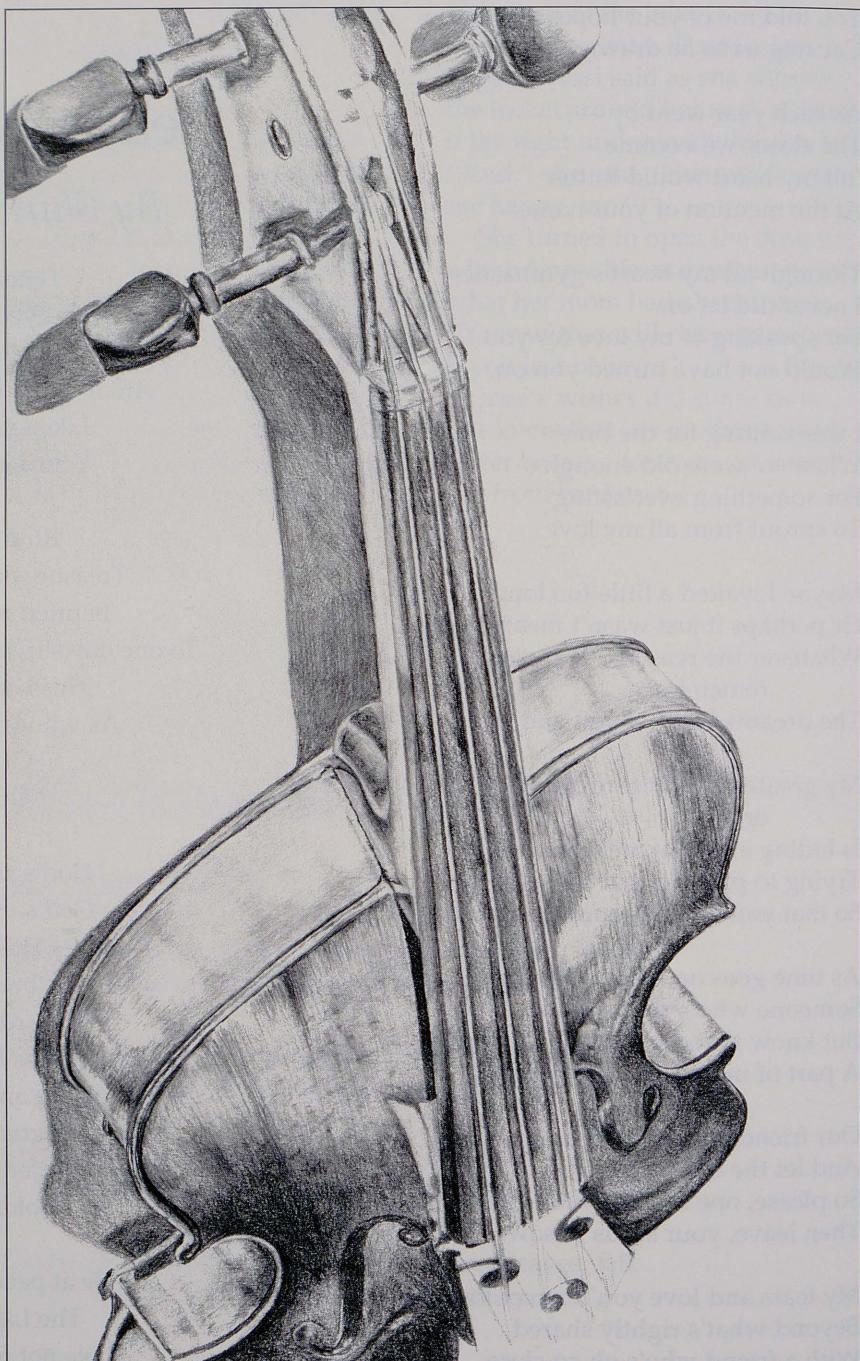
never knew. He was sure they wouldn't accept the facts.

Billy's heart never was in great shape—it's at rest now.

Jay was 'initiated' the first night he was in prison. He will never be

the same, but he tries. His rapists were so angry.

Jerry's been in and out of many treatment centers, but it only helps for awhile. He's independent. He will sleep in a culvert if he chooses.



VIOLA by Lisa Honeycutt

Ben's wife was one month pregnant when she found out he was positive. His baby girl is a doll and negative. It's not likely he will live to see her graduate from grade school, let alone high school. He spends every moment he can with her. Pedro went back to Mexico to lose himself. Anna is crocheting a pretty doily when she feels like it, but will she see it finished?

Linda has five children, the oldest not a teenager yet. Her IV drug user husband is dead. The children will be cared for by relatives when Linda dies.

Robert was so excited when he had his right breast nipple pierced and a chain earring in it! He had to show me. Ouch! He has gone to West Texas to try to again, to live with his mother.

Ray went to the bathroom and forgot why he was there. He had to be watched closely. He lived with strangers until he died.

Larry Lisa comes differently each month. One month he's dressed like a female hooker—thigh high boots, short, short skirt, earrings, wig and lipstick. The next month or two he's Larry; in jeans, T-shirt and tennies, but he wants to be a girl. He is in a medicine trial now, to see if it will work. The medicine made his breasts swell. He is thrilled.

People have said to me "they deserve what they get." No one deserves this disease. Do we just throw people away because they have an unpopular disease?

Human Immunodeficiency Virus.

Human is the key word here. Treat them as you would want to be treated. The old 'Golden Rule.' Do people even know what it means anymore?

Falling Star

By Judy Barham

"Relax and let your mind take you to some pleasant setting where you feel safe.
It might be a forest with light filtering through the trees ..."

His voice begins to drift farther and farther away from me until I can no longer understand his words.

The words are lost to me
And I strain to hear,
afraid I might miss some
important instruction.
Then, suddenly, I am flying
through space.

I am drifting in dark, purple space,
no longer aware of the chair in
which I sit
or the fan which is blowing in my
face or
the man who sits behind the desk.

I am flying in space,
climbing, spinning, smiling,
happy that I reached higher than a
mere forest.
Tiny stars flash by me
in showers of glorious glitter.
I hear no sounds, feel no sensations
except utter peace and safety.
There is no panic.

It is peaceful.
Me and deep purple space,
No one here but me.
I don't want to leave,
but his voice begins to disrupt
my flight.
I begin to tumble and fall
back into unwanted reality.

No! I don't want to come back!
I'm free out here and no one can
harm me,
and I am not afraid. I am not afraid.

I tumble so fast I have to grab
the arms of the chair in which I sit
to keep from falling out in the floor.
And now I open my eyes to
reality and
the real world.

I am afraid



MAN WITH HORN by Albert J. Swindall

Center Stage

By Shirley Puckett

The witching moment has come
Before apoplectic guests
Hourglass upside down
I wet my swollen tongue
With hemlock tea

Worms writhe in my stomach
I taste the bile they stir
Palms clammy
Limbs like cold chicken skin
Sand trickles down

Spirits use artful deception
Images whirl about the room
Hounds clash teeth, rip flesh
A revolting stench
Burns my nostrils

I open my mouth to speak
Still nothing comes
Buried alive, speechless
Unable to contest
Wizards hammer the nails

The sorcerer
Calls my attention
The grains are evenly divided
Focus impossible
Kaleidoscopic faces

Uncommon courage
Adrenaline rushes to my head
The walls stop melting
Distortion to familiar form
Chaos to order

Center Stage
Words spew from my lips
A geyser of gibberish
The ghouls nod, grin and wail
I take my seat

Purple Haze

By Ray Mutchall

*"Hey, Joe, I said—where ya' goin' with that gun in your hand?
Hey, Joe, where you gonna' run to now? Where you gonna' go?"*

Jimi Hendrix, 1967

"I am absolutely certain that, whereas in 1967 the enemy was winning, today he is losing! The enemy's hopes are bankrupt."

General William C. Westmoreland
21 November 1969

In Southeast Asia in 1971 zit-faced immortal boys fought for Mom, apple pie, the girl next door, the virtues of democracy, virginity, human rights, truth, justice and the American way. In Southeast Asia in 1972 calculating terrified men, oftentimes callous trigger-happy souls, fought a virtual "Wham-bam-thank-you-ma'am" of survival. The war, a well-meant yet arrogant waste of time, money, effort, sweat, spit, blood, pride, lives, limbs and a once carefree innocence, was in every sense but the obvious—cold—very cold indeed! All the while, back at the Pentagon, star-studded clowns were casually selling bloodied bits and pieces of the whole damned circus to the cheapest Congressman. Yet out of this company-sponsored glaciated hell came a long-haired, free-thinking individualist with a permanent reminder of the folly of war seated firmly upon his ass. Out of this apocalyptic supercilious special-forces hell, this steaming breathing putrescent hell, emerged a never-ending thirst for travel, an almost masochistic devotion to the acquisition of knowledge, and a very weary old man of 19.

Events overseas (in and around Vietnam), circumstance (a truly depressing lottery number), and the trust or exuberance of youth involuntarily thrust this young

man into the world of travel. This killer's conquests thus far include 14 foreign countries and 30 of the 50 states. He witnessed the British production of "Hair" while snuggling with an adorable blonde New Mexican named Dee in London. He drank cheap red wine with his best friend, a Somalian who called himself Smith, and diplomatically refused the sticky-sweet bathtub advances of his buddy's English girlfriend in Firenze. He gleefully puked Lowenbrau into the gutter outside of the Hofbrau Haus in München, yet stood in reverent wonderment, transfixed by the magnificent prancing of the aurora borealis on gently rolling pine-covered hillside near Tok, Alaska. After graciously accepting his discharge in 1974 (and promising not to re-enlist until the Canadians invaded Florida), he accordingly wound up in the tourism trade where, for nearly two decades, he guided unsuspecting tourists through two of God's own cathedrals, the Big Sur and Yosemite National Park in California.

Watching young friends cease to exist in less than a heartbeat, actively participating in government-sanctioned obscenities and being ordered to lie about events that never "officially" occurred in Cambodia and Laos miraculously spawned a surrealistic hunger for truth through knowledge. As a direct result of this seemingly wanton craving, he voraciously consumed Homer's "The Odyssey" and "The Iliad" in their entirety. He ravenously devoured Shakespeare's "Macbeth," "Hamlet," "King Lear" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Desperately hoping that this knowledge would somehow shield him from any future governmental entanglements, he sadistically and thor-

oughly digested Plato's "Republic," Marx and Engel's "Communist Manifesto" and the Bible from cover to ancient cover which leaves little left to explore but his personal philosophy.

Being shot in the left cheek (non-facial) metamorphosed an enthusiastic young idealistic into a born-again realist or journeyman philosopher shortly after the time of impact. Armed with a profound understanding of the Almighty's whimsical nature, this outlandish victim viewed the simple act of waking up breathing as a fine example or indication of things to come. He accepted everybody, regardless of race, religion, political affiliation or even sexual preference at face value, cared far more about who you are and rarely even considered the what of the matter. He firmly believed that judgment-passing, unlike the self-serving opinions of the small-minded, was best left up to the experts manning the Pearly Gates, and he of all people knew that appearances could be deceiving. An observant man once said that a certain amount of wisdom is thrust upon one with age, whether one wants it or not. This caring soldier, this peace-loving boob who purchased front row seats to the nightmare eternal, this walking contradiction of a human being, however, had learned that premature wisdom—the opportunistic lead wisdom that obscenely violates the bodies of our youth via the carnivorous barrel of national policy—is oftentimes the best kind of all.

Out of the humid, snake-infested, sweat-blood-and tear-stained jungles of Southeast Asia humped a well-traveled, knowledgeable individual with a type of wisdom or sense of well-being that some theologians never



SERENITY by Jennifer Allen

attain. Out of this frosty, greedy, screaming hell stomped a Cold War sucker who would refuse to abide by the seemingly mindless hindrances placed upon mankind by society. It is, at times, comforting to know that the Almighty can snatch one's hope-filled dreamy-scheming life away in an instant. At these times, one is reminded to get on with the business of living and experiencing and love-making, for tomorrow may be naught but an illusion, I have not yet returned to the jungle. That ambivalent arctic wasteland where our president was not a crook. That place that still conjures up

the twisted bodies, jagged metal, and drug-hazed imagery that will always haunt the frigid purple recesses of my mind; the scene of the crime.

Perhaps I never will. I fear it would be far too much like returning to the big-top after all of the performers had gone home. I suppose, when all is said and done, I still care a great deal about life, about humanity, about the triumph of the soul. I simply walk a different path now, and sometimes reflect with some nostalgia upon the road that might have been.

Her

By Camille Lyons

She is moody. Sometimes
Carefree, and sometimes she has
Stuff
on her mind.
One day,
she loves life,
And the next, she questions it.
"Why is this?"
she asks.
"Why is that?"
she demands.
She wonders where she will be in the future.
She wonders what will become of herself.
But,
why wonder?
Why not just live?
Day by Day, a mystery being uncovered.
Yet she is anxious to move on.
To
uncover the mystery of
Life.

The Process

By Mary Clay

Most of the male population of the world is familiar with The Process. They have practiced it, in one form or another, since time began. The standard procedure of The Process utilizes the inborn traits indigenous to the male species, said traits being the art of cunning and a small measure of perverse genius. Patience, caution and subtlety are also necessary, but must be learned by the male since they are not inborn attributes.

The Process, in general terms, involves a series of progressive

steps by which an end is attained, in this case, the ruination of a marriage.

Before beginning The Process, it should be noted that the female of the species favors the heartstrings over the brain cells. Therefore, repetition is crucial. Ideally, you should begin a few months into the first year of marriage while your wife still has stars in her eyes and twinkle dust is generously strewn throughout your love nest. A word of caution, however; do not introduce too many disgusting habits too closely together. For

best results, they must be spread over several months. The bathroom is your first target. Start small, like spitting toothpaste all over the mirror every time you brush your teeth. Your wife is no doubt familiar with this delightful custom, but, play it safe by lying low for a month or so before you rev up the old hoik-in-the-shower routine. Now repeat, repeat. When you are certain your wife has accepted these common male practices, move on to the final bathroom procedure. Instead of normal spattering of the toilet rim,

graduate to spraying the surrounding walls and floor, thereby guaranteeing that your wife will be scrubbing the entire area at least once a week. Be careful not to overdo it, though. Puddles on the floor are blatantly obvious. Remember, we're learning subtlety.

In or around the tenth month of marriage, slightly accelerate your obnoxious behavior. If you are typical, you are already throwing your dirty clothes on the bedroom floor, leaving them for Wifey to pick up. This is a minor infraction which you can easily turn into a major aggravation. Start leaving your socks and underclothes half right-side out and half wrong-side out. Your shirts should be wadded into a ball and thrown randomly into any corner, and you must always leave the belt in your slacks. To complete this annoying routine, never, never unknot your tie, hang up your suit coat or clean the mud off your shoes before entering the house.

Becoming more overt while still maintaining a degree of caution, the second year of marriage can bring you even more wicked pleasures. Start slowly, maybe two or three times a week, to fall asleep in your recliner in front of the television, then gradually work up to every night after dinner. Since Wifey has worked all day, she will be busy anyway cleaning up the kitchen after cooking your meal and doing a load of laundry because your favorite shirt is dirty. This conduct can be particularly reprehensible because, when your wife awakens you at bedtime, your batteries are recharged, turning you into a hunka-hunka burning love just as she is exhaustedly dropping into bed. It is not advisable to introduce anything new for three or four months after activating the television tactic. Just repeat, repeat and be patient.

When enough time has elapsed—when your wife leaves

you in the recliner and goes on to bed—you may add to your repertoire by sitting in front of the television watching ball games on the weekends. This, too, should be a gradual process, starting with half a day every other weekend and building up to two full days every weekend. Again, since your wife has worked all week, she will be busy anyway with cooking, cleaning and laundry. Another word of caution, though. Some wives catch on at this point, so be sure to keep the lines of communication open by frequently shouting out the score, jumping on the furniture and cheering when your team does something spectacular, or cursing loudly when the other team scores.

The third year of marriage is when you shift into high gear and move in for the kill, assuming that your wife is the saint you thought she was when you married her, which she surely is if she is still living with you. Extreme caution is advised at this point. After all, you aren't quite ready to lose your cook, your maid and your laundress. Gradually begin to cut whatever lines of communication remain until you become the quintessential clam. When your wife speaks to you, seize the opportunity to stare into space or at the television, but grunt every now and then, if you must, to keep the peace. On rare occasions, you may have the urge to exercise your vocal chords. If so, talk only about your job, your friends and sports, *ad nauseum*.

At the end of three years, your marriage should be in shambles, but not yet irreparable. If you wish to cast off all couture and decorum and thoroughly destroy both your lives, there is one last revolting procedure. While sitting in your recliner watching ball games, fill your trough with peanuts, potato chips, chitlings or any other food with a high fat and calorie content. Wash down your

goodies with lots of beer, then drink plenty of scotch or the hard liquor of your choice, during and after dinner until you reach the coma stage. A dual purpose is served here. Your nervous system becomes suppressed to the point that you will not hear your wife crying and, when you finally fall senseless into bed, the sound of your thunderous snoring will render your wife partially deaf, at which time she will leave your bed and move into the spare room down the hall.

Using artful manipulation and carefully pacing yourself through the proper procedures, you will realize your dream of becoming a slovenly, overweight, sullen, drunken slug who has single-handedly ruined his marriage. At this point, you have successfully completed The Process.

Dark Angel

By Rick Diamond

Johnny came by to talk to me the other day

"Hey, I like your hair," he said. "Now you need
an earring."

His black leather jacket crinkled, as always

His cocoa skin shone in my office lights

And he gestured wildly and emphatically, as usual,
dog tags tossing about his neck

"You look tired," he said.

"Are you giving up or something?"

I sat and stared for a minute or so at some books

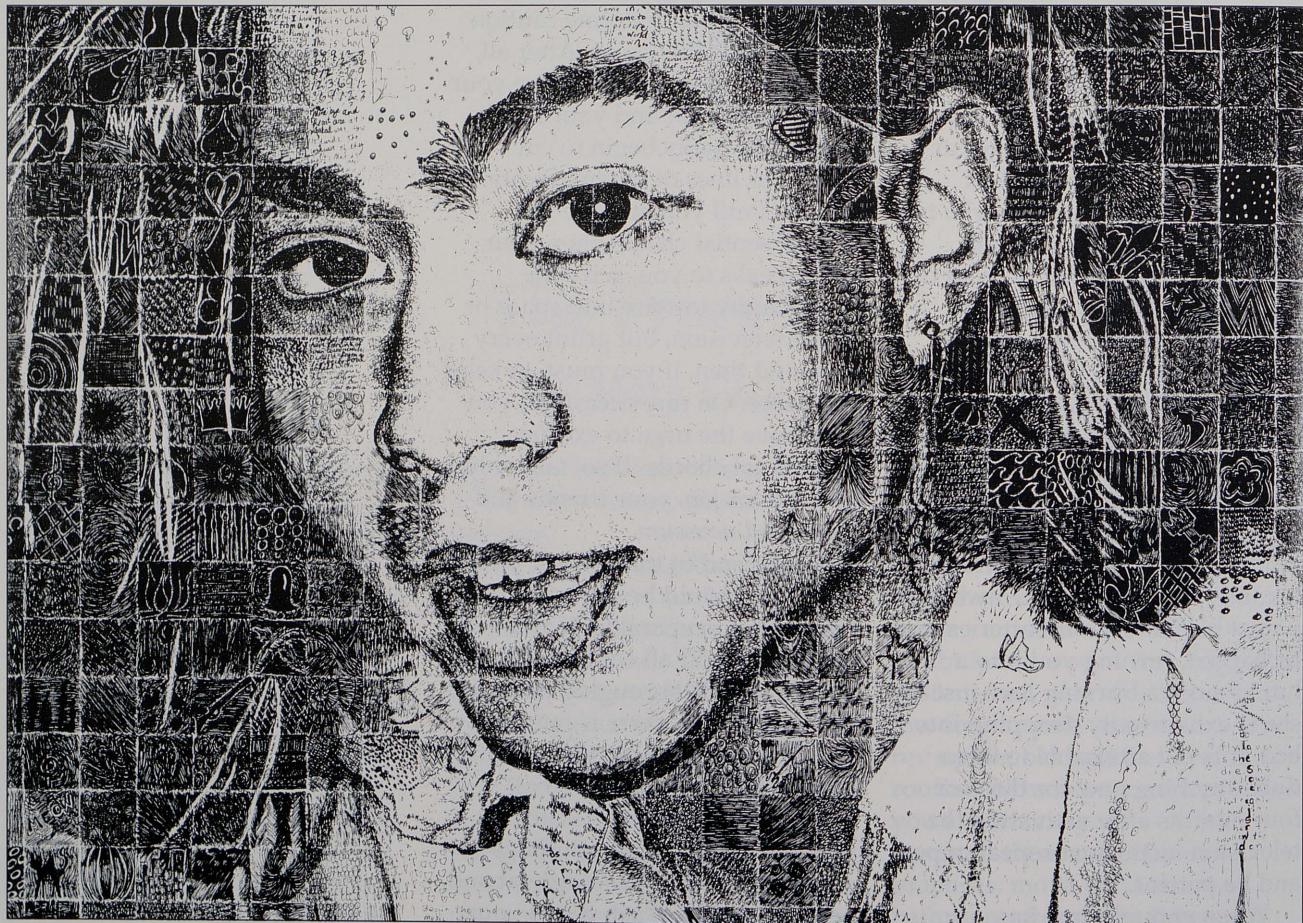
"Yes — some —" I answered

I remembered and looked at the rug and concrete

"Where did you end up?" I asked him.

I had to ask — everybody talked about it

"It's kind of a gas," He laughed, in his cynical-broken-
hearted-child voice, the voice that said, *here I am*



CHAD by Lisa Honeycutt

"It's not what you think," his big dark eyes darting past me
and looking back down
(it was always hard for him to look me in the eyes for
long, though after a while he could do it for longer)
"It's — it's not what I thought —
He's different — I'm kind of amazed, actually —"
and he smiled and nodded quickly
"I'll tell you about it some time"
And then his face tightened:
"Don't do it," he said
"Do what?" I asked, but I knew
"Don't stop, don't give in —" and he pointed his finger at
me — something he had never done before
Then he dragged his hands through his black curly hair,
longer now, softer
"What?" I said
He waited, thought, while his eyes looked above me —
not at the wall, but beyond it
not angry any more
just aware
still concerned, as he always was
he didn't want to know, didn't care
that it had hurt me and some others here
that some people had been relieved, sort of, when he —
that some, young and old, had said to me
"I know it's terrible, but I just feel that he
was a bomb waiting to go off — better him than
an innocent person"
I know, I had said —
thinking of the pain in his dark eyes and the
quickness of his mind
and thinking of myself, in him
"You said you could do it," he says —
"Can you? It's a hard line to walk —
it's lonely — some of them don't like it already —
look what they did to me —"
I don't say, *you did it to yourself*
because . . .
instead I say, "I know — I am tired —
but I think I can do it"
"Do it," he says, and points at me again as he fades into the
bookshelf
He scratches his black goatee
"Keep doing it, man.
Everything matters."

Our Perfect Pibble-Pabble

By Troy Alexander

Dashed lines passed on beside Harold Flison who watched them in his rearview mirror, transforming into longer, more stable, solid lines, disappearing around curves and atop hills. Steam was still rising from the asphalt, pushed upward from the evening rain, and Harold kept his speed steady, five m.p.h. below the speed limit, to take the corners better with his three bad tires. But he was in no hurry and found peace in the monotony of the world being thrown by him.

Harold had been driving for nearly 16 hours, stopping once, seven hours into his trip, to gas up, use the restroom and purchase a bagful of junk food to tide him over until he reached his destination. Where that would be was still unanswered. Just somewhere far from his mother and the life she ruined for him.

Harold was one of those unopen homosexuals, hiding behind "manly" deeds and women he does not care about to try to keep a reputation a narrow-minded society would call "normal." He had protected himself fairly well until his mother had found him in bed with his college roommate and lover of three years. Her scream, her steel-melting scream, echoed in Harold's head. "Pibble-pabble," she had yelled in her high-pitched, motherish voice, "Devilish pibble-pabble."

The radio D.J. was promising 30 minutes of continuous music, starting with Otis Redding's "Hard to Handle." The D.J. had been Harold's only companion for two hours, but in the last 15 minutes or so, Harold had been moving out of the station's range. Harold's mother would have called this music pibble-pabble. She seemed to call all the good things pibble-pabble. And you've

just discovered one more thing that fits under that category, haven't you Harold? he thought. Then Redding's majestic voice came on the air and Harold turned up the volume. "But it's such perfect pibble-pabble, Mom," he said, and pounded on the dash.

Harold had lost the station completely, but he entered some small town and decided to call it quits and start again in the morning. He pulled into a little convenience store, Pierce Grocery.

The cow bell on the door chimed its lonely chime when he pushed through the store's front door. The short man behind the counter was counting money, so Harold walked up without a hello.

"So is Pierce your name or the name of the town?" Harold asked. The man looked up, just long enough for Harold to see his abstract reflection in the man's mirrored sunglasses. Then he looked back down at the counter and shoved two fingers beneath his glasses to massage his eyes. He spoke without looking up.

"You're not from around here," he said blandly, "It's the town. You're in Pierce County," he said in the same tone as he made fists on the counter and leaned into them, never looking up.

"Well, I need a place to stay. Is there a motel near here?"

"No. No motels. We don't get many visitors. There is one in the next town, about 20 miles out. You goin' north?"

"Ah, yeah. Thanks." Harold turned to leave.

"Why don't you take a pair of sunglasses with you, in case you stop somewhere else in Pierce?" The man pointed to a rack at the front of an aisle while he continued to study his counter-top.

"That's all right," Harold said after a short pause.

"They're free," the man reassured, but Harold was already leaving.

He went back to his car and sat in it for two full minutes, thinking of the conversation he just had. Then he looked around and saw he was in the town square. It was dark, and the roads were dimly lit, but what looked to Harold like the county courthouse was nearly a hundred yards away. Roads on either side disappeared behind it, and small shops and stores lined those roads. Directly to Harold's left was some other building, probably less than 50 yards away, and much larger than the courthouse. A shadow was cast on the sign out front and Harold couldn't make it out.

Harold's mind went back to his mother, and all the scenery around him swam away. He saw her face, heard her scream again, and remembered how dirty he felt as his naked roommate slid out from under the covers and ran into the bathroom. Harold closed his eyes to block it out and concentrate on his present position, but to no avail. The tragedy swirled around in his head—the face, the scream. "Pibble-pabble," he said in unison with his mother and dozed off to sleep.

He slept peacefully and when he awoke seven hours later, he felt somewhat rejuvenated. The world around him was not the same. This new world had life. Cars passed and lost themselves along with the roads behind the courthouse. People walked in and out of shops, and Harold couldn't shake the feeling that something was odd about them, something consistent.

Now he read the sign in front of the large building aloud. "Pierce House for the Blind," and briefly considered why such a small community would have such a

large blind institute. Before he could delve into this deeply, his stomach spoke to him, and Harold got out of the car and scanning the shops for a café.

When he stood up, he could see above a tall bush in front of the courthouse. Beyond a slender man, a minister probably, was standing on something and preaching to whoever would listen. But no one was listening. Instead the people of Pierce County carried on their business as if the man weren't there. "And God wants you to see yourselves; look into one another..." the preacher announced.

Harold stood looking at the man, slightly appalled by the sight before him, and wondered why this man seemed different from everyone else in Pierce County, besides the obvious. There was just something—"they're free," Harold's mind echoed the store manager from the night before, and then it rushed to him all at once.

Everyone was wearing sunglasses. Everyone except the preacher. "God will force us to see. That he will," Harold heard the holy man say, and then something hit his ankle from behind. "Sorry 'bout that fella," the blind man said from behind Harold. His walking cane had struck Harold. After an uncomfortable pause while Harold tried to gain his senses, the blind man spoke again, "Smells like a wonderful day."

"Oh, yes, it is," Harold said after another pause.

"Sounds like the Reverend Colét has outdone himself today, a new sermon and all. Really outdone himself. Just wish I was deaf, too."

"Have you been blind all your life," Harold asked, wishing he could fish the words out of the air before they reached the blind man.

The blind man paused, "No, I did this myself, some three years ago," he said, and he pulled down his sunglasses, exposing swollen eyelids sealed shut by some old yellow pus.

"Yourself? Why—would you—"

Harold started.

"You're not from here."

"Well—no, but why?"

"I've got to go." Before Harold could say more, the blind man turned and hurried away in the opposite direction, tapping his cane quickly in front of him.

Harold turned around to study the people of Pierce again, but this time a few were staring back. Sunlight glared off their mirrored faces. Harold began walking, making his journey toward the reverend. He could feel the eyes watching him.

"The whole world is blind to death except us ..." the preacher yelled, and Harold began moving faster, more eyes weighing him down. No one was moving except him. "We must shed our glasses and allow God's way to persist against us, the sinners." Harold was jogging now, nearly to the preacher, and around Harold, people were beginning to make small steps, closing in on him. "We as sinners must see the pain of our neighbors, our soulmates," and Harold was under him, and the reverend turned and glared into Harold's eyes. *It was night and the reverend clutched his chest and fell from his platform he screamed but no one heard him because it was night and he was alone he clawed the ground and mucus foamed from his mouth and he closed his eyes and died*—and Harold turned away from the preacher and staggered, his new-found queasiness spawned by the vision he had just seen.

He looked back and the preacher was still there. "Don't fear your neighbor's death," he was saying. Harold's stomach churned, but he ran. He ran past his car and back into the store he had been in the night before. The man behind the counter looked up, and before he could look down again, Harold was on him. Harold ripped off the man's glasses, ignoring the faint sound of feet approaching from outside, and looked into the man's eyes:

The man clutched his steering wheel and pressed harder on the gas and when the curve came, the man pretended it wasn't there and continued forward and he went off the road. The large tree swallowed him and he didn't scream. Harold buried his head into his own shoulder and tried to fight the dizziness that had returned. "What is this," he pleaded without looking up.

He let go of the storekeeper, and the keeper stepped back. "We can see each other's death," the man pleaded back, "We don't have to with the glasses."

Harold left the store and slugged a man who stood between him and his car. The man fell but someone tackled Harold from the side, and soon everyone was on top of him. People wearing sunglasses peered over him like martians.

"We can let him go. He doesn't know anything," some lady said from somewhere in the huddle. Harold looked from person to person, and they looked away from him so they wouldn't have to look in his eyes. A large man with a beard kicked him in the side.

"Yes, he does," Harold heard the storekeeper. "I told him just now."

"We can't let him go," an older man said. "He'll bring more Lookers and they'll make us take off the glasses. Maybe even make us look at ourselves in mirrors." Harold just glared around himself confused. Thoughts raced through his mind. His mother, his roommate, the preacher. *Devilish pibble-pabble*, he thought and wondered if he had said it aloud. "But it is our perfect pibble-pabble," he thought he heard one of them say. Then someone hit him in the face, and he went out.

He awoke in a cold room, his face throbbing. He couldn't open his eyes, but a brief exploration of his face with his hands confirmed his fears. Bandages wrapped where his eyes had been. Harold screamed in a high-pitched, motherish voice.

Night

By Charline Perlewitz

I abhor this endless night
Whose clammy darkness chills my barren arms.
Its starless, moonless veils of black
Enmesh me in blank ennui;
Our yesterday is gone.

Yesterday—its dawning was your smile,
Its early sunlight our first kiss.
Its brilliance marked our path through life
Over silky roads and rocks alike,
Through clouds and shadows splashed with light,
And brambles cushioned in blooms.
But we knew, as noontime rushed toward dusk,
That your sunset approached too soon.
Grey dimness descended.
It's ended.
Our yesterday is gone.

Alone, I lift my dampened face.
Enduring, I grope to understand.
This night may never end.
But if tomorrow comes, it's mine, I fiercely think.
I'll reach with trembling, empty hands
To touch the light, to grasp the blooms,
To dare the thorn.
This second dawn is mine!

Eclipse

By Elaine Graybill

A silver moon slips
inside its black velvet case—
beauty in eclipse.



COOL AND WET by Brashante Choice

Absence of Normality

By Carolyn McDaniel

Should I have been content with normality? Was there an escape to something more? My do-it-yourself husband gave me that escape. This is that rare species of self-sufficient male who possesses infinite knowledge.

"Would he be willing to teach me what he appeared to be born knowing?" I asked. He agreed. We began. My husband Billy transformed me into Super Woman, able to speak and understand Male.

My first phase of transformation taught me an entire male vocabulary. For instance, he used geographic terms to give directions. It was "turn east on the Loop" or "north four miles, then west on the highway." Never understanding what happened to right and left, I began the new language. He gave directions in his native tongue as I would carefully write down the north/south/east/west details. Reassuringly, he would tell me if I had problems to telephone him.

I telephoned, "Sweetheart, I tried following your directions. Perhaps we can meet and go together. I'm calling from a convenience store. You can't miss me. I'm the one wearing heels and carrying a compass."

Eventually, success came. After driving to Dallas, I telephoned to confirm my safe arrival.

"Yes, the trip went well. I turned east on Northwest Highway," I triumphantly declared.

After learning to locate auto parts houses, lumber yards and hardware stores, I learned the names of the items inside. Billy continued this transformation simply and without pause. He drew a picture of the item he needed and told me the name.

"Here's the crescent wrench you wanted." I proudly an-

nounced.

"That's not a crescent wrench," he asserted.

"It looks like a crescent wrench." I held up the picture for emphasis, certain my tool was correct.

"That is a pipe wrench." Sensing my disappointment, he added, "Look, Hon, I'll draw a better picture."

Tool, bolt and screw diagrams filled the next few years. As we walked down the hardware aisles, I named the items.

"I see the wing nuts here, wood screws over there, that band saw at the end and this, this—whatchamacallit up here." There was more to learn.

Since I had begun speaking Male so well he began sending me to the hardware store alone. Before I left, he would role play the sales clerk. This prepared me for the inevitable barrage of questions.

"Remember, Dear," he always ended, "they will usually try to upgrade the sale. If these added features cost more, don't buy them. Get only what I ask for."

No problem. Economics I already understood. My first encounters with a clerk involved my excusing myself to "ask my husband" what choice to make. Hurriedly, I would call home to see if the wood needed to be Wolmanized or the screws needed to be galvanized.

One assignment was to buy a receptacle box. I was elated! I knew what this was! It was the square metal box that goes inside the wall and holds the electrical outlets. Entering the store I felt quite cocky, intending to pick it up myself. A clerk spotted me immediately and offered his help.

"I need a two outlet receptacle box," I confidently requested.

"With or without ears?" came his outrageous reply.

How dare he do this to me! Every fiber of my female being wanted to scream out that I neither knew nor cared about his stupid "ears." Suddenly, picturing Billy at home awaiting this item, I regained my composure and quickly recalled the earlier lesson.

Calmly I questioned, "Which is more expensive?"

"There's hardly any price difference," he responded.

"I'll have ears, thank you." I had matched skills with a professional and won. I felt like a super hero.

My husband accomplished the next phase, understanding Male, quite by accident. At first he seemed to have difficulty finding things.

"Hon, I can't find the white spray paint," he loudly broadcast.

"Did you look in the storage building?" I asked. There was silence. "It should be on the bottom shelf in the storage building. Did you look there?" Again, silence.

Assuming he had not heard me, I went to the storage shed and found the item on the bottom shelf directly in front. Recurring incidents of this nature forced me to conclude that the inability to find things was not the issue. It became obvious that the statement, "I can't find the spray paint," did not mean "I can't *find* the spray paint." It also did not mean "Where is the spray paint?" It meant, "Please bring me the spray paint."

More understanding came while on a long trip. My husband drove through a town with numerous gas stations. After he had passed all of the gas pumps, I commented that the gas gauge was showing "Empty" and the next town was 65 miles away.

Glancing at the gauge, he thoughtfully responded, "I think we can probably make it."

I inquired, "If we don't make it, do you think possibly we'll get a second chance?"

Next came a long, detailed explanation about his needing to check the gas mileage which would be more accurate the lower we allowed the gas level to go. He then included something about small stations and not seeing the brand he preferred. Silently I resolved that, as Shakespeare said, he "doth protest too much, methinks." Pondering the key words "think" and "probably," I deduced that "I think we can probably can make it" did not mean "I think we can probably make it." It meant "I forgot to stop at a gas station, and I'm not going back." Suddenly it became so clear and simple. I understood.

My husband can now rest. This semi-genius, kind-hearted, do-it-yourself mate of mine has completed his work I now fluently speak and understand Male. The exciting journey to this absence of normality came because my husband transformed me into Super Woman.



GLASS MAGIC by Columbus Newburn

Paper and Plastic

By Marquette Maresh

There's a corner of my room filled
with plastic trophies
and faded ribbons
and dangling medals.

There's a wall of my room plastered
with engraved plaques and certificates.

But who really cares?

Just pieces of paper and plastic that don't amount to anything
but a few moments of glory and recognition.

Nothing less
Nothing more

Funny—how they meant so much at the time
and now all they do is collect dust.

Sad, isn't it?

How the value of life is so frequently measured by
pieces of paper and plastic.

If a Cookie Monster Lived in The Arctic

By Stacy Richardson

You regret setting the alarm clock last night when the irritating crooning hammers through every cell to wake you the next morning. It won't stop wailing until Mr. Sandman decides to cut his story short, and you slam your clock against the far corner of your bedroom. You slip your arm out from under the thousands of hills and valleys of the patchwork countryside, outstretched over miles and miles of you and your bed, to switch on the modern-day lamp tree. As soon as one of the layers of patchwork earth leaves your skin, you feel every nerve cell in your arm and digits transform into ice crystals. Two dark, sleepy, bear eyes pierce out from the deep burrows of warmth to check on the time—6 a.m.

"Too early, and too cold," you tell yourself as you begin collecting your quilt over your head. Your mission, if you wish to accept it, is to make a quick dash to the living room to code in the correct coordinates to activate the automatic temperature unit, and then sprint back to your warm, cozy bed without receiving frostbite. You succeed in your mission and, while the toasty air waltzes around your room, you hear the faint song of Mr. Sandman softly rumbling your ear-drums. Faint sleep flows over your mind, allowing you to tumble into a soft, lazy sleep.

You regret setting the snooze on the fire alarm, for now it's loudly signaling a four-alarm fire in progress, and if you don't wake up in time you may be burnt by being late to your first, early morning class. So, again you decide to get up. Another earthquake awakens the patchwork country and you slip on your fluffy Babbs and Buster Bunny slippers. (No Relation). Ears

pointing to the nearest door, you head for the most dangerous room in the world—your closet. You march through acres and acres of unknown habitation and unseen wildlife. You spot the rare and semi-extinct yellow and white sweater with the green turtleneck shirt among the overgrowth of hangers and pants, swinging from limb to limb above the blue and gold clothes hamper. You decide to dress warmly for it is about ten degrees Celsius outside and your conscience tells you that Mother Nature will not allow it to warm up later in the day. You display your catch of the day over your bed and head and the coldest room in your apartment: the bathroom.

You are slowly devoured by the blackness as you pass through the rectangular entrance. Light leaps into action in the war against the dark and succeeds in defeating it by the flip of a switch. The turn of the silver knobs releases the man-made waterfall that descends from the mouth of the silver wall snake. Toasty white steam walks around the room, rising like death-angels looking for a soul to steal. Undressing under the quilt to keep warm, you mourn the loss of your security of warmth. You slip out of Babbs and Buster Bunny to step into the cold, white, fifteenth century wash tub. The silver wall snake turns and stares at you as you stare back. Then, he opens his mouth and you receive thousands of warm, needle-points of venom. Hopping back, you shiver in the cool air and start doing the traditional Eskimo dance of the Heat Gods. A couple of minutes later you decide to have another go at it. You slip back under the points of death and feel warm bubbles rolling down your spine, so, the dance worked after all.

One quick shower and dry off, you step out onto the red, plumpy bathroom rug lapped over the luxurious brown tile floor. Your toes don't seem to care that the little red men from Mars with troll-looking hair and fuzzy, spiral bodies, the little red creatures are yelling, "Die, Earth Scum!" Instead, they are happily enjoying stepping down on their soft, fluffy bodies. One more step and you hit—cold, tile floor! The cold, tickling sensation under your feet sends a shock signal from the tips of your toes, up your spine, to the top of your brain.

Running to the inert blackness of your mind, it goes to the General Head. He reads the message: "The toes are under attack. Send forces, pronto!" The General Head, very upset, sends a quick message back. "Run for your lives!" With that in mind, you head for the lush carpet of your room and the patchwork hill country you call home. Cuddled head and all under the warm, soft earth of Motherly Love, you hear the faint, familiar tones of Mr. Sandman, and the soft drumming of the bass drum in your ear. Soft Z's fly around your head as you snooze into sleep at 8:30 a.m.

You are warm and happy now, while you dream of flying sweet-peas and buttercups on a toasty spring day. You sit in waves of green and gold as you watch two baby robins playing overhead. You hear their mother in her nest as she sings that familiar, irritating crooning that hammers through every cell in your cranium. Again, your eyes pierce through the dark folds of color to give the "evil eye" to the alarm clock in the far corner, regretting the day you bought it. And, once more, on this cold arctic day, a cookie monster is up.

Dreams

By Shirley Puckett

Given to reverie
The heavens open up
And the sisters
Come out to play
Mystery whispers
Into the breeze
As Magic pulls
Colors from the sky
For Beauty
To make a rainbow
For her hair
They grasp hands

Skip across cotton clouds
Roll among blossoms
Eat clustered fruit
Drink honeyed milk
From a golden cup
Then off they soar
Through native air
Fresh and fair
And home again
Where dreams go
To be nurtured
And grow



SIMPLE TIMES by Michelle Marquess

Happiness Is Helping Others

by Chastity Flanagan

"All I really need to know about how to live and what to do and how to be, I learned in kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate-school mountain, but there in the sandpile at Sunday School."

As I look back on my kindergarten year, I can begin to see how the fundamentals have applied to my life. In kindergarten, whenever we had to do art, it seemed that all the girls would draw hearts because they were the easiest thing to draw. I know now that the heart is a complicated organ. It is made up of many valves, arteries and veins pulsating and pumping blood throughout the body. And when functioning properly, the heart is able to maintain life. In society, we know that the value of a person can be measured by the size of his heart. And even though the heart is not truly capable of emotion, it aches when we experience pain, it jumps when we feel excitement and in its own way, it is peaceful when we are happy, especially when that happiness occurs when we are helping someone in need.

The degree of that happiness can be measured by standards such as those set in the Rotary Four-Way Test. The Four-Way test was first formulated in 1932 by Sir Angus Mitchel to make progress toward the solution of world problems. Since then, Rotarians have been using the Four-Way test to direct their own hearts in all decisions from business to personal. Because it has been so successful for them, they have made a tremendous effort to pass this legacy to everyone, including young people like myself.

The test consists of four questions: Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build good will and better friendships? Will it be

beneficial to all concerned?

They say, "If only I knew then what I know now." I say, "If only I could remember the things I learned in kindergarten."

All children have to go to school, and like all children, I found myself in an environment that was a bit alarming. School, to me, was this enchanted fortress that Big Kids got to go to. Finally, I was one of those Big Kids or I thought I was. I discovered the truth very quickly as I was put into place by the overgrown first graders. I remember them chanting as they walked past my classmates and me, "Kindergarten babies, stick your head in gravy!" Talk about a blow to your ego!

So we thought that it would be easy to get revenge. We tried to come up with our own little tune. "First grade ..." but that is all we could think of to say. One point to the first graders. But then our teacher, Mrs. Attaway, sat us down and told us that sometimes, people say things that they really don't mean. And she made a special effort to highlight the fact that we were not babies. I remember seeing a sparkle of happiness in her eyes as we all smiled because she knew she had helped us to overcome one of the pains of growing up. And we were able to smile because we believed that teachers always tell the truth.

I often recall exclaiming to my mother, "That's not fair!"

And my mother's quick rebuttal, "Life's not fair."

Boys had never been on the top of my list, but now here I was sharing Elmer's glue and Crayola crayons with them. To a five-year-old, that was a big commitment. But an even bigger commitment, and one that seemed quite unfair, was when one of the boys in my kindergarten class called me his

girlfriend. Yuck! I wanted it to be a secret. I really didn't want to be his girlfriend, but he cried when I told him that, so I gave in. Little did I know that he was going to tell everyone! So now when the first graders walked by, they sang, "Chastity and Calvin sitting in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G!" I wasn't very excited about that song either, but I could see how happy Calvin was because now people were paying attention to him and he was now considered a kindergarten stud. Even at age five, I had to feel happy for him because he was learning a valuable lesson of life. But I think the lesson I learned was even more important—I learned that not all things in life are fair, but helping a person to find happiness is the ultimate reward because we can't help but be happy ourselves.

The most precious lesson that I learned in kindergarten was friendship. It was there, in Mrs. Attaway's kindergarten classroom, that I learned that friends are truly gifts from God. I no longer had to play house by myself and to pretend to be both the mommy and the baby. I now had people who understood me and cared about me. It was great! I remember one time on the playground, my friends and I were playing on the monkey bars. Guess who fell off? One of my friends picked me up and helped me walk to the nurse's office. And I knew that she was happy that she could help. From that day on, I have made many lasting friendships, each friend having the good will in their hearts to help me up whenever I need them, and happy, yet humble enough, to carry me wherever I may need to go.

My year in kindergarten had definitely benefited me, and the

rest of my classmates. We had finally come to the closing—graduation! Our next great adventure would be first grade. Mrs. Attaway looked down on her graduating class of 1981 and smiled. She had seen us through an entire year, a year full of new experiences, new ideas, new challenges, but she told us that she had learned more from us than we had learned from her. I never quite understood what she meant by that statement until now. As

children, we find beauty in the tiniest creations, we give love unconditionally, we hope without limits, we believe without doubt and we benefit all those who we come in contact with. As children we are able to help others understand the meaning of life and when they say "thank-you," we are happy to help.

Through the years, the lessons taught have changed, some of the friends have changed, but the memories of happiness remain, all

fundamental structures that can be recreated at any time. Thirteen years have passed since I first became the insecure kindergarten baby and I can see how the Rotary Four-Way test can be a guide for my life. Truth, fairness, good will, friendships and benefiting others are all practical lessons that the first graders can't understand, because the kindergarteners were busy learning that lesson, the lesson that happiness is helping others.

Imadork

By Silvana Vierkant

Beyond the small village of Giliad, deep into the surrounding forest, existed a devilish monster known as Imadork.

His diabolical dwelling existed in a bottomless pit situated in the heart of the forest. His habitat appeared completely void of all civilization and activity, except for the occasional wanderer into the forest who ended up tearfully regretting his venture. The incentive behind the traveler's unusual behavior was his terrifying encounter with Imadork.

Imadork was not just an ordinary monster. He was a monster who resembled the Prince of Darkness with his drooling mouth filled with jagged fangs, his gangling appendages, his snorty laughter, his tangled and soiled mane and his blood-red eyes that glowed in the dark. In addition, Imadork did not perform normal monster activities. Instead, the devious and narrow-minded monster attempted to reap and selfishly hoard all of the good looks that belonged to the villagers.

According to Giliad legend, when a villager attempted to enter Imadork's forest, he mysteriously reappeared after his journey

looking as if a swirling tornado whipped across the forest, sucked the villager into the whipping whirlwind of air, and spit him out. Other villagers who observed his appearance just assumed that he was having a bad day.

Even though Imadork enjoyed his daily raids, his favorite pastime occurred at night when he would slyly slink into people's bedrooms and tragically transform them from angelic specimens of beauty into people who felt like molded pig slop when they woke up in the morning. While Imadork strenuously tampered and toiled with the transformation, the people quietly slept, unaware of the beast-like creature who touched their faces. In the process of this inconceivable transformation, Imadork sprayed the person's mouth with sewer water, maliciously tampered with the person's hair until it looked and felt dirty and gritty, and artistically painted dark circles under each eye. When the person woke up in the morning, Imadork was nowhere to be found.

Why would a creature do such a destructive thing? Besides being superficial and narrow-minded,

Imadork looked extremely hideous. Imadork figured that, in order to attain some good looks, he would have to steal them from good-looking people. Yet, to this day, because Imadork is still the ugliest and the most loathsome creature around, he still furtively sneaks from house to house trying to steal good looks away from people, hoping that he will not be the ugliest monster in the world forever.

So, the next time you wake up in the morning and look at yourself in the mirror, do not immediately panic and run looking for the nearest comb and bottle of mouthwash. Just stop and remember that you are not alone. You are just one of the many conquests of Imadork and his unusual and disgusting artistry. Yes, there will still be those perfect people who wake up looking just as gorgeous as the night before. You do have two options: form a support group for people who are afraid to get out of bed in the morning or find Imadork and give him the addresses of those flawless people so that they, too, can become his victims.

Hannah

by Darron Moore

The tears were starting to seep out and she really had no idea what to do with them. A numbness held her as she quietly fell to pieces, stretched out like a limp rag doll on her bed. Her feet hung listlessly over the side, unfeeling, the life having drained out of them moments before when she finally realized it just wasn't there. Another frantic tear through her purse would only spread her meager belongings further throughout the room.

She had already done a pretty good job of that. The first thing she saw, the first she truly recognized through her tear streaked eyes was the battered old compact her mother had given her. She knew there was only a hint of powder left in it, but she carried it with her anyway. That and a silver locket were all she really had left of her mother besides her memories. She sometimes wondered if she would even have them if it were not for the tiny picture the little heart-shaped locket held.

Alongside the compact lay a dog-eared Harlequin romance, its gaudy spine creased and folded. She had begun reading it weeks before, finding time for a page at lunch, a paragraph between classes and chores. She had long ago ripped the cover off for fear of her father catching her with it. She had decided that he probably wouldn't understand.

Scattered, too, atop the handmade quilt were dozens of trial-sized lipsticks, ranging from the formal white to the romantic rose, and every other hue in between. She had gotten them free down at Woolworth's. Dozens of tubes, dozens of visits, each one marking a reenactment of a ceremony she had always enjoyed with her mother. A kind of pilgrimage

back to a happier time.

Throughout the mixed debris a common theme flowed: Kleenex. Even she had been amazed by the amount of tissue that had been hoarded in her one small handbag. Her father had told her once as he watched her get ready for school, "Hannah girl, there are cold soldiers in Korea with runny noses who are even now sorely missing the tissues you've got squirreled away in that bag of yours."

She had laughed with him at the time, but now the memory stung and brought the tears that much faster as they coursed down her cheeks to dampen the quilt. She had suddenly remembered that her mother had also been there, and the thought of her smiling face washed in early morning sunlight was too much.

She had been strong, she told herself. Stronger than all the tears that threw themselves at her daily these last few hard months. So strong, and now because of this, all for nothing. By tomorrow everyone would know and she did not know if she could handle that.

It hadn't been easy, not by any stretch, but she had managed to live every day now for five months since her mother's death. It had taken all she had. But she had shown them, shown them all: the preacher, school counselor, aunts and uncles, even her father. They all had taken their tack in trying to persuade her to let it out, to let it go and accept the fact that her mother was not going to be there in her apron at the door when she got off the bus, the smell of fresh-baked apple pie wafting past her smiling face. She could see her, clear as day. But that was only when she closed her eyes. They had pleaded, every last one of them, to let go and move on.

But that was the last thing she

could do. She would not give in and let them take her mother's memory away from her. So she had decided that she would never cry, never act out of sorts, never let go. The day after the funeral she was back at school, gently pushing aside offers of consolation, turning down hugs, ignoring sympathetic stares. And so they let it go, each one explaining her actions away as her own way of coping, of accepting.

She had beaten them though. Every day she had fought, harder than she had ever fought before, to keep that sweet pain alive—to keep a brightly burning torch alive inside for her mother, as bright as their love had been in the happy times.

But now it would all come out. Now everyone would know of the crying and sleepless nights and bitter demands of "Why?" when she knew she was alone. They would all see how she had failed—failed herself, but worse by far, failed her mother. Her sobs were silent. She had long since learned to keep them quiet, so she heard the knock on the front door downstairs. The door opened, and after several minutes of muted buzzing that could only be her father talking to whoever was there, it shut and was followed by soft steps climbing the stairs.

She tensed, her whole body rigid with the expectation of her Father bursting through the door to shout an accusing "A-hah!" But it didn't come. All that came was a tender knock and a gentle voice asking, "Princess, are you in there? One of your friends brought by something you left on the bus." A pause, and again, "Princess, are you all right? Hannah girl ..."

She didn't say anything. Instead she just lay there and willed herself to settle down. She was

sure her friend had informed her father of all she had read in the diary, but she would not give him the satisfaction of actually catching her in the act. She may have written a confession, but her father would never see her commit the crime. She shoved the mess from her ransacked purse back behind the pillows, carefully wiped her eyes and asked her father to come in.

"I think it was Mary Gwen that brought this ..." But he couldn't finish as he looked up to see her puffy eyes and tear-reddened cheeks. He just put the blue velvet covered book he held in his hands down on her vanity and went to hold his little girl.

They didn't talk for a while, a long while, as her tensed muscles began to loosen, one by one, under his steady bear hug. She didn't want to cry, but it came, and she let him hold her as the pain of five months swept out of her like a sudden summer thunderstorm. He didn't let go once, didn't relax his hug for even a second, and she loved him more than she had ever before.

Much later, as he tucked her exhausted little body into bed, she gave him a final squeeze. "I'm so sorry, Daddy," she managed to whisper before collapsing back and falling into a deep, restful sleep.

He watched her sleep, and some time after he was sure she was deep in a pleasant dream, while stroking her bangs away from her untroubled eyes, he said, "So am I, Princess. So am I."

To All

by Erica Van

Our dreams are reality to them;
Our desires—their experiences;
Our fantasy world—their daily lives;
Our existence—their worst nightmares.

We beg to be let into their world!
They laugh at our complaints.
"Y'all have it good!" they say condescendingly.
"Don't have to work, live on welfare!"

No! No more! Not again!

We work to come together!
We slave to build one world!
We smother ourselves
In the depths of prejudice
To open the doors of the world.
TO ALL!

But the doors will not open,
For they stand in its way!
Blocking the light of hope;
Barring the path to the future!
The hope, the path that should bring us together.

What do we do now?
Do we wait for the Almighty to pull us out
Pull us out of the flames of purgatory?
Can we wait? Can we endure?
Can we continue to take the pain
Of being left out?
Can we continue to live in a world
Not constructed to give freedom
TO ALL?!

Withstanding the piercing, flaming arrows
Of discrimination, prejudice,
Racism, sexism, ageism—
We must do this and more
We, those who have suffered—
Socially, politically, economically,
The irrational hatred they hold—
Have to work to insure
Liberty, freedom and security
TO ALL!

Yes, Ma'am, Miss Marsh

by Judith Caswell

The eraser sailed across the room and hit the boy in the shoulder with a soft thunk. Almost simultaneously Miss Marsh kicked the bottom drawer of her desk shut with a slam. She would have no more trouble from this boy.

As an English teacher at John Tyler High School from 1928 to 1958 and a Robert E. Lee High School from 1958 until 1964, Miss Sarah Marsh became a legend because of her strict, uncompromising discipline. That discipline enabled her students to excel, not only in their writing, but also in many other facets of their lives.

History instructor Jerry Simpson said Miss Marsh kept a desk drawer full of erasers in her classroom on the third floor of John Tyler. If a student provoked her by falling asleep or by uttering a smart aleck comment, she would open the drawer, pull out an eraser and very accurately throw it at him. Occasionally, she missed the student. If the eraser happened to go out one of the two big windows, she would grandly look at her watch, which apparently had a second hand, and say, "You've got two minutes to get down there and get that eraser and bring it back up here." This technique was very effective.

English instructor Noamie Byrum remembered an athlete telling her he was not paying attention in Miss Marsh's class when Miss Marsh walked to his desk, picked up his textbook and threw it out the window. Then she said, "Young man, I'll give you two minutes to get down there, get the book and get back up here."

"Yes, m'am, Miss Marsh," he replied and nearly killed himself racing down and back up to the stairs. Byrum said his final com-

ment to her was, "Gosh, I love that woman!"

Although Miss Marsh was a petite lady, she was so intimidating that no one doubted that she could pick up a 250-pound football player and heave him out the window.

Former librarian Mary Jane McNamara recalled Miss Marsh quoting the maxim attributed to Louis XVIII, "Punctuality is the politeness of kings."

Byrum said, "I was lost on my first day at John Tyler. I walked into somebody's classroom. The woman looked at my schedule and screamed, 'Oh, my gosh! Come with me!' She left her class, grabbed my hand and dashed down the hall holding up her skirt so she could run faster. All the way down the hall she was saying, 'You can't be late. You can't be late.'"

"As she pushed me into the room no more than 15 seconds after the bell, Miss Marsh, who was standing in front of the room, said nothing for a moment. I stood there in bewilderment. The students looked horrified because they knew what to expect. 'What is your name?' Miss Marsh asked."

"Noamie," I replied."

"Yes? What is your name?"

"Noamie Ruth Stiles," I answered."

"Miss Stiles, you will sit in front of my desk." I quickly learned that Miss Marsh always called students 'Mr.' or 'Miss' with their surnames, and she expected students to answer with, 'Yes, M'am, Miss Marsh' or 'No, M'am, Miss Marsh.' Since I never read anything literary, Miss Marsh would periodically say, 'You will come to my classroom during your off period next Friday and report to me on "Ivanhoe" or

"The Black Arrow." Of course, I would reply, 'Yes, m'am, Miss Marsh.'"

German instructor Fred Herschbach Jr. said, "I believe Sarah Marsh used the terror of her small stature to force every student to learn whether he wanted to or not. In her class after the bell rang, everyone was to be in his seat. One day I was day-dreaming and sharpening my pencil, and I did not hear the bell ring. Suddenly out of dead silence, this lady screamed, 'Mr. Herschbach!!' When I turned around, the entire class was staring at me. The blood drained from my head, and I crawled back to my chair."

Miss Marsh allowed no one to chew gum in class. "If anyone chewed gum in her class, he or she had to put five cents in a jar on her desk," said Humanities Dean Dr. Linda Watkins. "One day I was chewing gum in her class. I don't know why I chose to chew gum in Miss Marsh's class! She said, 'Miss Griffin, is that gum that you're chewing?' I meekly got up and put a nickel in the jar on her desk."

Miss Marsh allowed no one to adjust the blinds or windows in her room. Mc Namara said, "One day a boy threw the windows to the top while Miss Marsh had stepped out into the hall. When she came back in, she demanded to know who had raised the windows. 'I am going to find out who did it. If nobody tells me, every one of you is going to receive a failing grade for this six weeks,' she said. Finally the defiant boy admitted he had raised the windows. Miss Marsh took him out into the hall, chewed him out verbally, and sent him to the principal's office."

Years later McNamara heard a

young woman say, "My daddy nearly got kicked out of school for putting the windows up in Miss Marsh's classroom."

"I know," McNamara said. "I was in that class."

Miss Marsh's rules insured that every student had an equal chance to learn. You couldn't disturb anyone else," Byrum said. "No one had privileges. Miss Marsh was very democratic, very egalitarian."

Miss Marsh also fostered discipline in her teaching methods. "During the first week of school she would write 100 punctuation and spelling rules on the blackboard," said Simpson. Every student had to memorize the rules and write them back to her perfectly, or he or she would receive an 'F' in the course. Some students had to take this test nine or ten times before they received a 100 on it.

Herschbach said, "Those of us who survived her class and appreciated her, cherished that set of rules because no where else have we seen them all written down. Today kids don't learn most of those rules."

Miss Marsh also insisted that every student have essay corrections and the rules for mistakes exactly right and initialed by her, or he would fail that six weeks," English instructor Judy Turman said. I've seen students reduced to tears over their corrections."

Margaret Marsh Mebus had dinner with her three aunts every Wednesday night. After dinner they would go into the library, and Mebus remembered that the telephone rang and rang. "Most of the calls were for Aunt Sarah because she had this rule that if a student didn't get every paper corrected perfectly, he or she would fail that six weeks. Aunt Sarah would answer the telephone and say, 'Oh, I'm so sorry, Mrs. So and So, but those are my rules, and he will receive an 'F' for this six weeks.' Parents would call

begging her to change her mind, but she never did."

English instructor Jan Kent said he wore a hole in his paper with his eraser because he had corrected the same sentence so many times for Miss Marsh.

Watkins said, "Miss Marsh would make us revise essays again and again. She would say, 'The messier your rough drafts are the better writer you will be. Nobody writes perfectly the first time or even the second time.'" Miss Marsh did not like redundancy or circumlocution. Watkins said, "Today business and industry would be very pleased with Miss Marsh because they want employees who can write well."

"Although she was strict," said former accounting instructor John Saleh, "Sarah Marsh was fair, and her explanations of assignments were clear and well-structured. I enjoyed her English class. She was the best English teacher I ever had and the most attractive teacher at John Tyler."

Byrum said, "My family life was rather chaotic, but I felt a sense of peace, order and security in Miss Marsh's classroom. She was dependable, consistent, predictable and fair. My impression was one of cleanliness and security, yet within the order there was room for creativity. She gave me a lot of personal attention. As a teacher, looking back at that, I don't know how she did that with 150 students. That personal interest speaks of the highest caliber. I cannot say that I am an English teacher because of Sarah Marsh, but, now that I am an English teacher, I think of her as a model of tenacity, courage and spirit, and her example has made me somewhat fearless. She felt a deep joy in being able to tame the savages, and she had a real reverence for the written word. I treasure several poetry books, anthologies and collections of English literature I bought at the Marsh estate sale. They are

well-marked in her handwriting. She probably read them over and over."

"I owe Sarah Marsh an appreciation for structure and the need to try to use grammar well and to appreciate the language that we speak as opposed to turning it into a slang language with all kinds of artificialities in it," Herschbach said. Watkins remembered Miss Marsh was quite a character, who left an indelible impression. "Some of us who never do anything out of the ordinary will never leave an impression. Any teacher who emphasizes writing carries students through life and helps them excel in any career. I can attribute my good writing to Miss Marsh."

"Miss Marsh cemented my desire to be an English teacher," Turman said. "I never had any doubts about punctuation or grammar from the time I was in her class."

Mebus said, "Although they might have been intimidated by Aunt Sarah at the time, she did receive many letters and telephone calls from former students praising her for forcing them to learn the rules of writing the English language. Aunt Sarah demanded that students give their best, and they did. Eventually, they all memorized and learned what she wanted them to learn."

McNamara said, "Miss Marsh was compassionate. She would spend endless time with a student who wanted to learn. I've often seen her give a student a pat on the shoulder and say, 'You're doing fine. You're doing fine.' She was never willing to give up on students. They couldn't just fail or make a bad grade in her class. They were going to learn and improve their writing, or she just wouldn't turn them loose. She was going to make something better out of a student even if she had to scare him to death to do it. Although Sarah Marsh was a wealthy woman who could have

been a social butterfly, she chose to serve humanity as a teacher. She transferred all her mothering instincts to generation after generation of children whose lives she meant to improve, and she did. A good teacher like her raises everybody's children. She has had an eternal, positive influence on several generations of this city."

As I laboriously rewrote this

essay for the fourth time, regretting that I was born a little too late to be in Miss Marsh's English class, I saw a petite female figure looming over me saying, "Revise! Revise! Revise! No one ever wrote perfectly the first or even the second time. And is that gum you have in your mouth, Miss Caswell?"

"No, m'am, Miss Marsh," I

said. "I've just been gnashing my teeth as I slave over this revision."

"But think how gratified you will be over your accomplishment when you finish this assignment." Then she put her hand on my shoulder and said, "You're doing fine! You're doing fine!"

I sighed, turned back to my essay and replied, "Yes, m'am, Miss Marsh."



COMPARISONS by Barbara Holland



GERONIMO by Mary Rackley

Continuance

by Chip Searcy

Before I wake, I will wonder.
Before I sleep, I will ask.
Before I die, I will Know.



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is printed on recycled paper.

